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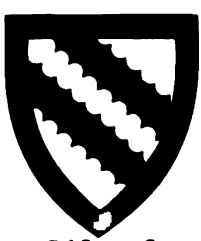

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WOMAN ON HER OWN, FALSE GODS AND THE RED ROBE: THREE PLAYS BY BRIEUX

WOMAN ON HER OWN, FALSE GODS AND THE RED ROBE: THREE PLAYS BY BRIEUX. THE ENGLISH VERSIONS BY MRS BERNARD SHAW, J. F. FAGAN, AND A. BERNARD MIALL. WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY BRIEUX

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CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Woman On Her Own	1
False Gods	127
The Red Robe	219

842
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PREFACE

We are confronted at the present time by the woman who is anxious to lay by means for her own support irrespective of the protection of her husband. In this play I have indicated the tendency of this difficulty and the consequent troubles which the older civilizations will bring upon themselves when the woman's standing as a worker is generally acknowledged. My conclusion, namely, that all these complications and troubles are, at present at any rate, owing to the education of the man, points to the remedy, as far as I can see it.

I must inform my readers that the version of La Femme Seule, a translation of which is now published in this volume, has, so far, not appeared in France and is unknown there; at least as regards the larger part of the third act. I might, did I think it advisable, reproduce in its entirety a text which certain timidities have led me to emasculate.

As between the man and the woman the ideal situation would, no doubt, be a rehabilitation of the old custom — the man at the workshop and the woman in the home; thus reserving for her the holiest and most important of all missions — the one which insures the future of the race by her enlightened care of the moral and physical health of her children.

Unfortunately it happens that the wages of the working-man are insufficient for the support of a family, and the poor woman is therefore compelled to go to the factory. The results are deplorable. The child is

either entirely abandoned, or given to the State, and the solidarity of the family suffers in consequence.

Then again a generation of women with new ideas has arisen, who think they should have, if they wish it, the right to live alone and by themselves, without a husband's protection. However much some of us may regret this attitude, it is one which must be accepted, since I cannot believe that the worst tyrants would dare to make marriage obligatory. These women have a right to live, and consequently a right to work. Also there are the widows and the abandoned women.

Women first took places which seemed best fit for them, and which the men turned over to them because the work appeared to be of a character suitable to the feminine sex. But the modern woman has had enough of the meagre salary which is to be obtained by means of needle-work, and she has invaded the shop, the office, the desks of the banks and post office. In industry also she has taken her place by the side of the working-man, who has made room for her first with ironical grace, then with grumbling, and sometimes with anger. I believe that in Europe at least this kind of difficulty will have to be faced in the future.

As to the rich woman (and in La Femme Seule I have treated this subject only slightly because it is one to which I expect to come back), they have been driven from the home where the progress of domestic science has left them very little to do. We have reached a kind of hypocritical form of State Socialism, or perhaps it would be better to say Collectivism, and this will profoundly change the moral outlook. All, or nearly all, of the work of the home seems to be done by people from the outside — from the cleaning of the windows to the education of the children. The modern home is but a fireside around which one hardly sees the family gathered for intimate talk.

It has thus happened that the woman who finds herself without work, and with several children, looks out of the windows of her home away from it for the employment of her activities. The future will tell us whether or no this is good. In my opinion I believe it will be good, and I believe that man will gain, through this new intelligence, in the direction of the larger life which has come to women from this necessity of theirs. Unquestionably there will have to be a new education, and this will certainly come.

La Foi. — This play is, without doubt, of all my plays the one which has cost me the most labor and the one upon which I have expended the most thought and time. The impulse to write it came to me at Lourdes in view of the excited, suffering, and praying crowds of people. When the thought of writing it came to me I hesitated, but during many years I added notes upon notes. And it was while on a trip to Egypt that I saw the possibility for discussing such questions in the theatre without giving offence to various consciences. My true and illustrious friend, Camille Saint-Saëns, has been kind enough to underline my prose with his admirable music. In this way La Foi has been produced on the stage at Monte Carlo for the first time under the auspices of His Royal Highness the Prince of Monaco, whom I now beg to thank.

English readers of La Robe Rouge would, I think, be somewhat misled, if they did not understand the difference between the procedure in criminal cases in France and in Great Britain. My purpose in this preface is to attempt to show that difference in a few words.

With you, a criminal trial is conducted publicly and before a jury; with us in France it is carried on in the Chambers of the Judge with only the lawyer present. There sometimes result from this latter method dramas of the kind of which my play La Robe Rouge is one.

The judge, too directly interested and free of the criticism which might fall on him from the general public, is liable to the danger of forming for himself an opinion as to the guilt of the accused. He may do this in perfect good faith, but sometimes runs the risk of falling into grave error. It thus occasionally happens that he is anxious not so much to know the truth as to prove that he was right in his own, often rash, opinion.

La Robe Rouge is a criticism of certain judicial proceedings which obtain in France; but it is also a study of an individual case of professional crookedness. We should be greatly mistaken were we to draw the dangerous conclusion that all French judges resemble Mouzon, and we should be equally wrong were we to condemn too hastily the French code relating to criminal trials.

In the struggle of society with the criminal it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for the legislator to hold in equal balance the rights of the individual as against the interests of society. The balance sometimes leans one way and sometimes the other; and had I been an English citizen, instead of writing a play against the abuse of justice by a judge, I might have had to illustrate the same abuse by the lawyer.

I wish most sincerely that these three plays may interest the people of England and America. The problems which I have studied I am sure I have not brought to their final solutions. My ambition was to draw and keep the attention of honest people on them by means of the theatre.

BRIEUX.

WOMAN ON HER OWN

[La Femme Seule]

Translated by Mrs. Bernard Shaw

ACT I

SCENE: — *A Louis XV sitting-room. To the right a large recessed window with small panes of glass which forms a partition dividing the sitting-room from an inner room. A heavy curtain on the further side shuts out this other room. There are a table and piano and doors to the right and at the back. The place is in disorder. One of the panes in the large window has been taken out and replaced by a movable panel. It is October.*

Madame Guéret is sitting at a table. She is a woman of forty-five, dressed for the afternoon, cold and distinguished looking. Monsieur Guéret, who is with her, is about fifty-five and is wearing a frock coat. He is standing beside his wife.

GUÉRET. Then you really don't want me to go and hear the third act?

MADAME GUÉRET [*dryly*] I think as I 've been let in for these theatricals solely to please your goddaughter you may very well keep me company. Besides, my brother is coming back and he has something to say to you.

GUÉRET [*resignedly*] Very well, my dear.

A pause.

MADAME GUÉRET. I can't get over it.

GUÉRET. Over what?

MADAME GUÉRET. What we 're doing. What *are* we doing?

GUÉRET. We 're giving a performance of *Barberine* for the amusement of our friends. There 's nothing very extraordinary in that.

MADAME GUÉRET. Don't make fun of me, please. What we are doing is simply madness. Madness, do you hear? And it was the day before yesterday — only the day before yesterday — we heard the news.

GUÉRET. We —

MADAME GUÉRET [*who has seen Lucienne come in*] Hush!

Lucienne comes in, a girl of twenty, dressed as Barberine from Musset's play; then Maud, Nadia, and Antoinette [*eighteen to twenty-two*], *dressed as followers of the queen. Lucienne goes to the piano, takes a piece of music, and comes to Madame Guéret.*

LUCIENNE. You 'll help me along, won't you, dear Madame Guéret? You 'll give me my note when it comes to "Voyez vous pas que la nuit est profonde"?

MADAME GUÉRET. Now don't be nervous.

MAUD [*coming in*] We 're ready.

ANTOINETTE. If the third act only goes as well as the first two —

MAUD. We 'll listen until we have to go on.

ANTOINETTE. Won't you come with us, Madame?

MADAME GUÉRET. No, I can't. I 've had to undertake the noises behind the scenes. *That* job might have been given to someone else, I think.

LUCIENNE. Oh, Madame, please don't be angry with us. Madame Chain let us know too late. And you 're helping us so much.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, I 've invited the people, and I suppose I must entertain them. As I gave in to Thérèse about getting up this play, I don't want to do anything to spoil the evening.

LUCIENNE. How pretty she is as Kalekairi.

MADAME GUÉRET. You don't think people are shocked by her frock?

LUCIENNE. Oh, Madame!

MADAME GUÉRET. Well!

LUCIENNE. I shall have to go in a moment. Thérèse has come out; I can hear her sequins rattling.

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes; so can I. But René will let us know. Never mind.

She goes to the piano. René appears at the door at the back.

RENÉ. Are you ready, Lucienne?

LUCIENNE. Yes.

RENÉ. You 've only two lines to say.

LUCIENNE. Only one. [*She speaks low to René*] No end of a success, was n't it, for your Thérèse?

RENÉ [*low*] Was n't it? *I am* so happy, Lucienne. I love her so.

LUCIENNE. Listen. That 's for me, I think.

RENÉ. Yes, that 's for you. Wait. [*He goes to the door at the back, listens, and returns*] Come. Turn this way so as to make it sound as if you were at a distance. Now then.

Madame Guéret accompanies Lucienne on the piano.

LUCIENNE [*sings*]

Beau chevalier qui partez pour la guerre,
Qu'allez vous faire
Si loin d'ici?

Voyez-vous pas que la nuit est profonde
Et que le monde
N'est que souci.

MADAME GUÉRET [*civilly*] You have a delightful voice, Mademoiselle Lucienne.

Lucienne places her music on the piano with a smile to Madame Guéret.

RENÉ [*to Lucienne, drawing her to the partition window and showing her where a pane has been removed*] And your little window! Have you seen your little window? It was not there at the dress rehearsal. You

lift it like this. It 's supposed to be an opening in the wall. It ought to have been different; we were obliged to take out a pane. May I show her, Madame Guéret?

MADAME GUÉRET [*resigned*] Yes, yes, of course.

RENÉ. You lift it like this; and to speak you 'll lean forward, won't you, so that they may see you?

LUCIENNE. I will, yes.

RENÉ. Don't touch it now. [*To Madame Guéret*] You won't forget the bell, will you, Madame? There 's plenty of time — ten minutes at least. I 'll let you know. Mademoiselle Lucienne, now, time to go on.

LUCIENNE. Yes, yes. [*She goes out*]

MADAME GUÉRET [*with a sigh*] To have a play being acted in the circumstances we 're in — it 's beyond everything! I cannot think how I came to allow it.

GUÉRET. You see they 'd been rehearsing for a week. And Thérèse —

MADAME GUÉRET. And I not only allowed it, but I 'm almost taking part in it.

GUÉRET. We could n't put off all these people at twenty-four hours' notice. And it 's our last party. It 's really a farewell party. Besides, we should have had to tell Thérèse everything.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, you asked me to keep it all from her until to-morrow — though it concerns her as much as it does us. [*Monsieur Féliat comes in, a man of sixty, correct without being elegant*] Here 's my brother.

FÉLIAT. I 've something to tell you. Shall we be interrupted?

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes, constantly.

FÉLIAT. Let 's go into another room.

MADAME GUÉRET. I can't. And all the rooms are full of people.

GUÉRET. Marguerite has been good enough to help here by taking the place of Madame Chain, who 's ill.

MADAME GUÉRET [*angrily*] Yes, I 've got to do the noises heard off! At my age! [*A sigh*] Tell us, Etienne, what is it?

GUÉRET. We can wait until the play is over.

MADAME GUÉRET. So like you! You don't care a bit about what my brother has to tell us. Who 'd ever believe this is all your fault! [*To her brother*] What is it?

FÉLIAT. I have seen the lawyer. Your goddaughter will have to sign this power of attorney so that it may get to Lyons to-morrow morning.

GUÉRET [*who has glanced at the paper*] But we can't get her to sign that without telling her all about it.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, goodness me, she 'll have to know sometime! I must say I cannot understand the way you 've kept this dreadful thing from her. It 's pure sentimentality.

GUÉRET. The poor child!

MADAME GUÉRET. You really are ridiculous. One would think that it was only *her* money the lawyer took. It 's gone, of course; but so is ours.

GUÉRET. We still have La Tremblaye.

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes, thank goodness, because La Tremblay belongs to me.

René comes in in great excitement.

RENÉ. Where is Mademoiselle Thérèse? She 'll keep the stage waiting! [*Listening*] No, she 's coming, I hear her. Nice fright she 's given me! [*To Madame Guéret*] Above all, Madame, don't forget the bell, almost the moment that Mademoiselle Thérèse comes off the stage.

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes, yes.

RENÉ. And my properties! [*He runs out*]

FÉLIAT. Now we can talk for a minute.

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes.

FÉLIAT. You 've quite made up your minds to come to Evreux?

GUÉRET. Quite.

FÉLIAT. Are you sure you won't regret Paris?

MADAME GUÉRET. Oh, no.

GUÉRET. For the last two years I 've hated Paris.

MADAME GUÉRET. Since you began to play cards.

GUÉRET. For the last two years we 've had the greatest difficulty in keeping up appearances. This lawyer absconding is the last blow.

FÉLIAT. Are n't you afraid you will be horribly bored at La Tremblaye?

GUÉRET [*rising*] What are we to do?

FÉLIAT. Well, now listen to me. I told you —

René comes in and takes something off a table. Féliat stops suddenly.

RENÉ. Good-morning, uncle. [*He hurries out*]

FÉLIAT. Good-morning, René.

GUÉRET. He knows nothing about it yet?

FÉLIAT. No; and my sister-in-law asked me to tell him.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, why should n't you? If they *are* engaged, we know nothing about it.

GUÉRET. Oh!

MADAME GUÉRET. We know nothing officially, because in these days young people don't condescend to consult their parents.

FÉLIAT. René told his people and they gave their consent.

MADAME GUÉRET. Unwillingly.

FÉLIAT. Oh certainly, unwillingly. Then I 'm to tell him?

MADAME GUÉRET. The sooner the better.

FÉLIAT. I 'll tell him to-night.

GUÉRET. I 'm afraid it 'll be an awful blow to the poor chap.

MADAME GUÉRET. Oh, he 's young. He 'll get over it.

FÉLIAT. What was I saying when he came in? Ah, yes; you know I 've decided to add a bindery to my printing works at Evreux; you saw the building started when you were down there. If things go as I want them to, I shall try to do some cheap artistic binding. I want to get hold of a man who won't rob me to manage this new branch and look after it; a man who won't be too set in his ideas, because I want him to adopt mine; and, at the same time, I 'd like him to be not altogether a stranger. I thought I 'd found him; but I saw the man yesterday and I don't like him. Now will *you* take on the job? Would it suit you?

GUÉRET. Would it suit me! Oh, my dear Féliat, how can I possibly thank you? To tell you the truth, I 've been wondering what in the world I should do with myself now; and I was dreading the future. What you offer me is better than anything I could have dreamt of. What do you say, Marguerite?

MADAME GUÉRET. I am delighted.

FÉLIAT. Then that 's all right.

GUÉRET [*to his brother-in-law*] I think you won't regret having confidence in me.

FÉLIAT. And your goddaughter?

MADAME GUÉRET. Thérèse?

FÉLIAT. Yes; how is *she* going to face this double news of her ruin and the breaking off of her engagement?

MADAME GUÉRET. I think she ought to have sense enough to understand that one is the consequence of the other. She can hardly expect René's parents to give their son to a girl without money.

FÉLIAT. I suppose not. But what 's to become of her?

GUÉRET. She will live with us, of course.

MADAME GUÉRET. "Of course"! I like that.

GUÉRET. She has no other relations, and her father left her in my care.

MADAME GUÉRET. He left her in *your* care, and it 's *I* who have been rushed into all the trouble of a child who is nothing to me.

GUÉRET. Child! She was nineteen when her father died.

FÉLIAT. To look after a young girl of nineteen is a very great responsibility.

MADAME GUÉRET [*laughing bitterly*] Ho! Ho! Look after! Look after Mademoiselle Thérèse! You think she 's a person who allows herself to be looked after! And yet you 've seen her more or less every holidays.

GUÉRET. You 've not had to look after her; she has been at the Lycée.

Thérèse comes in dressed as Kalekairi from "Barberine." She is a pretty girl of twenty-three, healthy, and bright.

THÉRÈSE. The bell, the bell, godmother! You 're forgetting the bell! Good-evening, Monsieur Féliat.

Thérèse takes up the bell, which is on the table.

MADAME GUÉRET. I was going to forget it! Oh, what a nuisance! All this is so new to me.

FÉLIAT. Excuse me! I really did n't recognize you for the moment.

THÉRÈSE [*laughing*] Ah, my dress. Startling, is n't it?

MADAME GUÉRET [*with meaning*] Startling is the right word.

RENÉ [*appearing at the back, disappearing again immediately, and calling*] The bell! And you, on the stage, Mademoiselle Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. I 'm coming. [*She rings*] Here I am!

She goes out.

MADAME GUÉRET [*with a sigh*] And I had it let down!

FÉLIAT. What?

MADAME GUÉRET. Her dress. [*To her husband*] What I see most clearly in all this is that she must stay with us.

René comes fussing in.

RENÉ. Where 's the queen? Where 's Madame Nérisse?

MADAME GUÉRET. I 've not seen her.

RENÉ. But goodness gracious —! [*He goes to the door on the left and calls*] Madame Nérisse!

MADAME NÉRISSE [*from outside*] Yes, yes, I 'm ready.

Madame Nérisse comes in. She is about forty, flighty, and a little affected.

RENÉ. I wanted to warn you that Ulric will be on your right, and if he plays the fool —

MADAME NÉRISSE. Very well. Is it time?

RENÉ. Yes, come. [*To Madame Guéret*] You won't forget the trumpets?

MADAME GUÉRET. No, no. All the same, you 'd better help me.

RENÉ. I will, I will.

He goes out with Madame Nérisse.

FÉLIAT. You know, if she wants one, she 'll find a husband at Evreux.

MADAME GUÉRET. Without a penny!

FÉLIAT. Without a penny! She made a sensation at the ball at the sous-préfecture. She 's extremely pretty.

MADAME GUÉRET. She 's young.

FÉLIAT. Monsieur Gambard sounded me about her.

MADAME GUÉRET. Monsieur Gambard! The Monsieur Gambard who has the house with the big garden?

FÉLIAT. Yes.

MADAME GUÉRET. But he 's very rich.

FÉLIAT. He 's forty-nine.

MADAME GUÉRET. She 'll have to take what she can get now.

FÉLIAT. And I think that Monsieur Beaudoin —

GUÉRET. But he 's almost a cripple!

MADAME GUÉRET. She would n't do so well in Paris.

GUÉRET. She would n't look at either of them.

FÉLIAT. We must try and make her see reason.

René enters busily. Lucienne follows him. Féliat is standing across the guichet through which Barberine is to speak. René pulls him away without ceremony.

RENÉ. Excuse me, Uncle; don't stand there before the little window.

FÉLIAT. Beg pardon. I did n't know.

RENÉ. I have n't a moment.

FÉLIAT. I 've never seen you so busy. At your office they say you 're a lazy dog.

MADAME GUÉRET. Probably René has more taste for the stage than for business.

RENÉ [*laughing*] Rather! [*To Lucienne*] Now, it 's time. Come. Lift it. Not yet! There! *Now!*

LUCIENNE [*speaking through the guichet*] "If you want food and drink, you must do like those old women you despise — you must spin."

RENÉ. Capital!

LUCIENNE [*to Féliat*] Please forgive me, Monsieur, I 've not had time to speak to you.

FÉLIAT. Why, it 's Mademoiselle Lucienne, Thérèse's friend, who came and stayed in the holidays! Fancy my not recognizing you!

LUCIENNE. It 's my dress. I *do* like playing this part. I have to say that lovely bit — you know — the bit that describes the day of the ideal wife. [*She recites, sentimentally*] "I rise and go to prayers, to the farmyard, to the kitchen. I prepare your meal; I go

with you to church; I read a page or two; I sew a while; and then I fall asleep happy upon your breast."

FÉLIAT. That 's good, oh, that 's very good! *Barberine* — now, who wrote that?

LUCIENNE. Alfred de Musset.

FÉLIAT. Ah, yes; to be sure, Alfred de Musset. I read him when I was young. You often find his works lying about in pretty bindings.

RENÉ. Uncle, Uncle; I beg your pardon, but don't speak so loud. We can hardly hear what they 're saying on the stage.

FÉLIAT [*very politely*] Sorry, I 'm sure.

RENÉ [*to Lucienne*] You. *Now.*

LUCIENNE [*speaking through the guichet*] "My lord, these cries are useless. It grows late. If you wish to sup — you must spin" [*turning to the others*] There! Now I must go over the rest with Ulric.

She runs out, with a little wave of adieu to Féliat.

RENÉ [*to Madame Guéret*] The trumpets, Madame. Don't forget.

MADAME GUÉRET. No, no. Don't worry.

René goes out.

FÉLIAT. You blow trumpets?

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes; on the piano.

FÉLIAT. I don't know what to do with myself. I don't want to be in the way. I 'm not accustomed to being behind the scenes.

MADAME GUÉRET. Nor am I.

Thérèse comes in in the Kalekairi dress, followed by René.

THÉRÈSE. It 's time for me now.

FÉLIAT [*to Madame Guéret*] She really looks like a professional actress.

RENÉ [*to Thérèse*] Now!

THÉRÈSE [*speaking through the little window*] "My lady says, as you will not spin, you cannot sup. She

thinks you are not hungry, and I wish you good-night." [*She closes the little window and says gayly*] Good-evening, Monsieur Féliat.

RENÉ. Now then, come along. You go on in one minute.

THÉRÈSE [*to Féliat*] I 'll come back soon.

She goes out.

RENÉ [*to Madame Guéret*] Now, Madame, *you*, Quick, Madame!

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes, yes. All right.

She plays a flourish of trumpets on the piano.

RENÉ. Splendid!

MADAME GUÉRET. Ouf! It 's over. At last we can have peace! If she 's such a fool as to refuse both these men —

GUÉRET [*interrupting*] She won't refuse, you may be sure.

MADAME GUÉRET [*continuing*] — we shall have to keep her with us. But I shall insist upon certain conditions.

GUÉRET. What conditions?

MADAME GUÉRET. I won't have any scandals at Evreux.

GUÉRET. There won't be any scandals.

MADAME GUÉRET. No; because she 'll have to behave very differently, I can tell you. She 'll have to leave all these fine airs of independence behind her in Paris.

GUÉRET. What airs?

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, for instance, getting letters and answering them without any sort of supervision! [*To her brother*] She manages in such a way that I don't even see the envelopes! [*To her husband*] I object very much, too, to her student ways.

GUÉRET. She goes to classes and lectures with her girl friends.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, she won't go to any more. And she will have to give up going out alone.

GUÉRET. She 's of age.

MADAME GUÉRET. A properly brought up young lady is never of age.

FÉLIAT. Perfectly true.

MADAME GUÉRET. And there must be a change in her way of dressing.

GUÉRET. There will. She 'll have to dress simply, for she won't have a rap.

MADAME GUÉRET. That has nothing to do with it. I shall make her understand that she will have to behave like the other girls in good society.

FÉLIAT. Of course.

MADAME GUÉRET. I shall also put a veto on certain books she reads. [*To her brother*] It 's really dreadful, Etienne. You 've no idea! One day I found a shocking book upon her table — a horror! What do you suppose she said when I remonstrated? That that disgraceful book was necessary in preparing for her examination. And the worst of it is, it was true. She showed me the syllabus.

FÉLIAT. I 'm afraid they 're bringing up our girls in a way that 'll make unhappy women of them.

MADAME GUÉRET. Don't let 's talk about it; you 'll start on politics, and then you and Henri will begin to argue. All the same I mean to be very good to her. As soon as she knows what 's happened her poor little pretensions will come tumbling about her ears. I won't leave her in uncertainty, and even before she asks I 'll tell her she may stay with us; but I shall tell her, too, what I expect from her in return.

GUÉRET. Would n't it be better —

MADAME GUÉRET. My dear, I shall go my own way. See what we 're suffering now in consequence of going

yours. Here 's Madame Nérisse. Then the play is over. [*To her husband*] You must go and look after the people at the supper table. I 'll join you in a minute.

GUÉRET. All right.

He goes out.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I 've hardly ever been at such a successful party. I wanted to congratulate dear Thérèse, but she 's gone to change her dress.

MADAME GUÉRET [*absently*] So glad. Were you speaking of having a notice of it in your paper?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Of your play! If I was going to notice it! I should think so! The photographs we had taken at the dress rehearsal are being developed. We shall have a wonderful description.

MADAME GUÉRET [*imploring*] Could it be stopped?

MADAME NÉRISSE. It 's not possible! Just think how amazed the subscribers to *Feminine Art* would be if they found nothing in their paper about your lovely performance of *Barberine,* even if the editress of the paper had n't taken a part in the play. If it only depended on me, perhaps I could find some way out — explain it in some way, just to please you. But then there 's your charming Thérèse — one of our contributors. I can't tell you what a wonderful success she 's had with her two stories, illustrated by herself. People adore her.

MADAME GUÉRET. Nobody would know anything about it —

MADAME NÉRISSE. Nobody know! There are at least ten people among your guests who will send descriptions of this party to the biggest morning papers, simply for the sake of getting their own names into print. If *Feminine Art* had nothing about it, it would be thought extremely odd, I assure you. [*She turns to Féliat*] Would n't it, Monsieur?

FÉLIAT. Pardon me, Madame, I know nothing about these things.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, we 'll say no more about it.

MADAME NÉRISSE. But what 's the matter? You must have some very good reason for not wanting me to put in anything about your delightful party.

MADAME GUÉRET. No — only — [*Hesitating*] Some of our family are country people, you know. It would take me too long to explain it all to you. It does n't matter. [*With a change of tone*] Then honestly you think Thérèse has some little talent?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Little talent! No, but very great talent. Have n't you read her two articles?

MADAME GUÉRET. Oh, I? I belong to another century. In my days it would have been considered a very curious thing if a young girl wrote novels. My brother feels this too. By the way, I have not introduced my brother to you. Monsieur Féliat, of Evreux — Madame Nérisse, editress of *Feminine Art*. Madame Nérisse has been kind enough to help us with our little party. [*To Madame Nérisse*] Yes — you were speaking about — what was it — this story that Thérèse has written. No doubt your readers were indulgent to the work of a little amateur.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I wish I could find professionals who 'd do half as well. I 'm perfectly certain the number her photograph is going to be in will have a good sale.

FÉLIAT. You 'll publish her photograph?

MADAME NÉRISSE. In her dress as Kalekairi.

MADAME GUÉRET. In her dress as Kalekairi!

MADAME NÉRISSE. On the front page. They tell me it 's a first-rate likeness. I 'll bring you one of them before long, and your country relations will be delighted. If you 'll excuse me, I'll hurry away and change my dress.

MADAME GUÉRET. Oh, please excuse me for keeping you.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Good-bye for the present. [*She goes to the door*] I was looking for Maud and Nadia to take them away with me. I see them over there having a little flirtation. [*She looks through the door and speaks pleasantly to Maud and Nadia, who are just outside*] All right, all right; I won't interrupt. [*To Madame Guéret*] They 'd much rather come home alone. Good-bye. [*She bows to Féliat*] Good-bye, Monsieur. [*Turning again to Madame Guéret*] Don't look so upset because you have a goddaughter who can be a great writer or a great painter if she chooses; just as she would have been a great actress if she had taken a fancy for that. Good-bye again and many congratulations.

She goes out.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well! Anyway, she 's not *my* daughter! I must go and say good-bye to everybody. When I 've got rid of them, I 'll come back and see Thérèse. Will you wait for me? You 'll find some papers on that little table. Oh, goodness, what times we live in!

Madame Guéret goes out. Féliat, left alone, strolls to the door and looks in the direction in which Madame Nérisse had seen Maud and Nadia. After a moment he shows signs of indignation.

FÉLIAT [*shocked*] Oh, I say, this is really — I must cough or something, and let them know I 'm here. [*He coughs*] They 've seen me. They 're waving their hands — and — they 're going on just the same!

Lucienne and Thérèse in ordinary dress come in and notice what Féliat is doing.

THÉRÈSE [*to Lucienne*] What is he doing?

LUCIENNE. What 's the matter?

They advance to see what has caused his perturbation. He hears them and turns.

FÉLIAT. It is incredible!

THÉRÈSE. You seem rather upset. What 's the matter?

FÉLIAT. What 's the matter? Those girls are behaving in such a scandalous way with those young men.

LUCIENNE. Let 's see.

FÉLIAT. Oh, don't look! [*Suddenly stopping, half to himself*] Though I must say —

THÉRÈSE [*laughing*] What must you say?

FÉLIAT. Nothing.

LUCIENNE. I know. You mean that we 're just as bad.

FÉLIAT. No, no, not as bad.

LUCIENNE. Yes, yes; well — almost. [*Féliat makes a sign of protest*] I saw you watching us yesterday after the rehearsal! You saw I was flirting, and I know you imagined all sorts of horrid things. Our little flirtations are not what you think. When we flirt we play at love-making with our best boys, just as once upon a time we played at mothering with our dolls.

FÉLIAT. But that does n't justify —

THÉRÈSE. You don't understand. People spoil us while we 're children, and then look after us so tremendously carefully when we grow up that we guess there must be delightful and dangerous possibilities about us. Flirting is our way of feeling for these possibilities.

LUCIENNE. We 're sharpening our weapons.

THÉRÈSE. But the foils have buttons on them, and the pistols are only loaded with powder.

LUCIENNE. And it 's extremely amusing and does no harm to anybody.

THÉRÈSE. Monsieur Féliat, you 've read bad books. Nowadays girls like us are neither bread-and-butter misses nor demi-vierges. We 're perfectly respectable young people. Quite capable and self-possessed and, at the same time, quite straight and very happy.

FÉLIAT. I 'm perfectly sure of it, my dear young ladies. But you know I 've had a great deal of experience.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, *experience!* Well, you know —

LUCIENNE. Oh, *experience!*

THÉRÈSE. You say you have experience; that only means you know about the past better than we do. But we know much better than you do about the present.

FÉLIAT. I think those girls there are playing a dangerous game.

THÉRÈSE. You need n't have the smallest anxiety about them.

FÉLIAT. That way of going on might get them into great trouble.

THÉRÈSE. It won't, I assure you. Monsieur Féliat, believe me, you know nothing about it.

LUCIENNE. We 're clever enough to be able to take care of ourselves.

FÉLIAT. But there are certain things that take you by storm.

LUCIENNE. Not us. Flirting is an amusement, a distraction, a game.

THÉRÈSE. Shall we say a safety valve?

LUCIENNE. There 's not a single one of us who does n't understand the importance of running straight. And, to do them justice, these boys have no idea of tempting us to do anything else. What they want, what we all really want, is a quite conventional, satisfactory marriage.

FÉLIAT. I most heartily approve; but in my days so much wisdom did n't usually come from such fascinating little mouths.

THÉRÈSE. Now how can you blame us when you see that really we think exactly as you do yourself?

FÉLIAT. In my days girls went neither to the Lycée

nor to have gymnastic lessons, and they were none the less straight.

LUCIENNE [*reflectively*] And yet they grew up into the women of to-day. I get educated and try to keep myself healthy, with exercises and things, because I want to develop morally and physically, and be fit to marry a man a little bit out of the ordinary either in fortune or brains.

THÉRÈSE. You see our whole lives depend upon the man we marry.

FÉLIAT. I seem to have heard that before.

LUCIENNE. Yes; so 've I. But it 's none the less true for that.

THÉRÈSE. Is n't it funny that we seem to be saying the most shocking things when we 're only repeating what our grandfathers and grandmothers preached to their children?

LUCIENNE. They were quite right. Love does n't make happiness by itself. One has to consider the future. We do consider it; in fact we do nothing else but consider it. We want to get the best position for ourselves in the future that we possibly can. We 're not giddy little fools, and we 're not selfish egotists. We want our children to grow up happy and capable as we 've done ourselves. We 're really quite reasonable.

FÉLIAT [*hardly able to contain himself*] You are; indeed you are. It makes one shudder. Excuse me, I 'm going to supper.

LUCIENNE. Let 's all go together.

FÉLIAT. Thanks, I can find my way.

LUCIENNE. It 's down that passage to the right.

FÉLIAT. Yes, I shall find it, thank you.

He goes out.

THÉRÈSE. You shocked the poor old boy.

LUCIENNE. I only flavored the truth just enough to

make it tasty. But I 've something frightfully important to tell you. It 's settled.

THÉRÈSE. What 's settled?

LUCIENNE. I 'm engaged.

THÉRÈSE. You don't say so.

LUCIENNE. It 's done. Armand has been to his people and they 've come to see mine. So I need n't play any more piano, nor sing any more sentimental songs; I need n't be clever any more, nor flirt any more, nor languish at young men any more. And how do you suppose it was settled? Just what one would n't have ever expected. You know my people were doing all they could to dress me up, and show me off, and seem to be richer than they are, so as to attract the men. On my side I was giving myself the smartest of airs and pretending to despise money and to think of nothing but making a splash. Everything went quite differently from what I expected. I wanted to attract Armand, and I was only frightening him off. He thought such a woman as I was pretending to be too expensive. It was just through a chance conversation, some sudden confidence on my part, that he found out that I really like quite simple things. He was delighted, and he proposed at once.

THÉRÈSE. Dear Lucienne, I 'm so glad. I hope you 'll be very, very happy.

LUCIENNE. Ah, that 's another story. Armand is not by any means perfect. But what can one do? The important thing is to marry, is n't it?

THÉRÈSE. Of course. Well, if your engagement is on, mine 's off.

LUCIENNE. Thérèse! Why I 've just been talking to René. I never saw him so happy, nor so much in love.

THÉRÈSE. He does n't know yet. Or perhaps they 're telling him now.

LUCIENNE. Telling him what?

THÉRÈSE. I 've lost all my money, my dear.

LUCIENNE. Lost all your money!

THÉRÈSE. Yes. The lawyer who had my securities has gone off with them.

LUCIENNE. When?

THÉRÈSE. I heard about it the day before yesterday. Godpapa and godmamma were so awfully good they never said anything to me about it, though they 're losing a lot of money too. They thought I had n't heard, and I expect they wanted me to have this last evening's fun. I said nothing, and so nobody knows anything except you, now, and probably René.

LUCIENNE. What will you do?

THÉRÈSE. What can I do? It 's impossible for him to marry me without a penny. Of course I shall release him from his promise.

LUCIENNE. You think he 'll give you up?

THÉRÈSE. His people will make him. If they cut off his allowance, he 'll be at their mercy. He earns about twenty dollars a month in that lawyer's office. So, you see —

LUCIENNE. Oh! poor Thérèse! And you could play Barberine with a secret like that!

THÉRÈSE [*sadly*] I 've had a real bad time since I heard. It 's awful at night!

LUCIENNE. My dearest! And you love him so!

THÉRÈSE [*much moved*] Yes — oh! don't make me cry.

LUCIENNE. It might do you good!

THÉRÈSE. You know — [*She breaks down a little*]

LUCIENNE [*tenderly*] Yes — I know that you 're good and brave.

THÉRÈSE. I shall have to be.

LUCIENNE. Then you 'll break off the engagement?

THÉRÈSE. Yes. I shall never see him again.

LUCIENNE. Never see him again!

THÉRÈSE. I shall write to him. If I saw him I should probably break down. If I write I shall be more likely to be able to make him feel that we must resign ourselves to the inevitable.

LUCIENNE. He 'll be horribly unhappy.

THÉRÈSE. So shall I. [*Low and urgently*] Oh, if he only understood me! If he was able to believe that I can earn my own living and that he could earn his. If he would dare to do without his people's consent!

LUCIENNE. Persuade him to!

THÉRÈSE. It 's quite impossible. His people are rich. Only just think what they 'd suspect me of. No; I shall tell him all the things his father will tell him. But oh! Lucienne, if he had an answer for them! If he had an answer! [*She cries a little*] But, my poor René, he won't make any stand.

LUCIENNE. How you love him!

THÉRÈSE. Oh, yes; I love him. He 's rather weak, but he 's so loyal and good and [*in a very low voice*] loving.

LUCIENNE. Oh, my dear, I do pity you so.

THÉRÈSE. I am to be pitied, really. [*Pulling herself together*] There 's one thing. I shall take advantage of this business to separate from godpapa and godmamma.

LUCIENNE. But you have no money —

THÉRÈSE. I 've not been any too happy here. You know they 're — [*She sees Madame Guéret and whispers to Lucienne*] Go now. I 'll tell you all about it to-morrow. [*Louder and gayly*] Well, good-night, my dear. See you to-morrow at the Palais de Glace or at the Sorbonne! Good-night.

LUCIENNE. Good-night, Thérèse.

She goes out.

MADAME GUÉRET [*speaking through the door*] Yes,

she 's here. Come in. [*Guéret and Féliat come in*] Thérèse, we have something to say to you.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, godmamma.

MADAME GUÉRET. It 's about something important; something very serious. Let us sit down.

GUÉRET. You 'll have to be brave, Thérèse.

MADAME GUÉRET. We are ruined, and you are ruined too.

THÉRÈSE. Yes.

MADAME GUÉRET. Is that all you have to say?

THÉRÈSE. I knew it already.

MADAME GUÉRET. You *knew* it? Who told you?

THÉRÈSE. The lawyer told me himself. I had a long letter from him yesterday. He begs me to forgive him.

MADAME GUÉRET. Well, I declare!

THÉRÈSE. I 'll show it to you. He 's been gambling. To get a bigger fortune for his girls, he says.

MADAME GUÉRET. You *knew* it! And you 've had the strength, the — duplicity?

THÉRÈSE [*smiling*] Just as you had yourself, godmamma. And I 'm so much obliged to both of you for saying nothing to me, because I 'm sure you wanted me to have my play to-night and enjoy myself; and that was why you tried to keep the news from me.

MADAME GUÉRET. And you were able to laugh and to *act!*

THÉRÈSE. I 've always tried to keep myself in hand.

MADAME GUÉRET. Oh, I know. All the same — And I was so careful about breaking this news to you, and you knew it all the time!

THÉRÈSE. I 'm very sorry. But you —

MADAME GUÉRET. All right, all right. Well, then, we have nothing to tell. But do you understand that you 've not a penny left?

GUÉRET. You 're to go on living with us, of course.

MADAME GUÉRET [*to her husband*] You really might have given her time to ask us. [*To Thérèse*] We take it that you have asked us, and we answer that we will keep you with us.

GUÉRET. We are going to Evreux. My brother-in-law is giving me work in his factory.

MADAME GUÉRET. We will keep you with us, but on certain conditions.

THÉRÈSE. Thank you very much, godmamma, but I mean to stay in Paris.

GUÉRET. You don't understand. We are going to live at Evreux.

THÉRÈSE. But *I* am going to live in Paris.

GUÉRET. Then it is I who do not understand.

THÉRÈSE. All the same — [*A silence*]

MADAME GUÉRET. I can hardly believe that you propose to live in Paris by yourself.

THÉRÈSE [*simply*] I do, godmamma.

FÉLIAT. Alone!

GUÉRET. Alone! I repeat, I don't understand.

FÉLIAT. Nor do I. But no doubt you have reasons to give to your godfather and godmother. [*He moves to go*]

THÉRÈSE. There 's no secret about my reasons. All the world may know them. When I 've explained you 'll see that it 's all right.

MADAME GUÉRET. I must confess to being extremely curious to hear these reasons.

THÉRÈSE. I do hope my decision won't make you angry with me.

MADAME GUÉRET. Angry! When have I ever been angry with you?

THÉRÈSE [*protesting*] You 've both been — you 've all three been — *most* good and kind to me, and I shall always remember it and be grateful. You may be sure I shan't love you any the less because I shall live in

Paris and you at Evreux. And I do beg of you to feel the same to me. I shall never forget what I owe to you. Father was only your friend; we 're not related in any way: but you took me in, and for four years you 've treated me as if I was your daughter. From my very heart I 'm grateful to you.

GUÉRET [*affectionately*] You don't owe us much, you know. For two years you were a boarder at the Lycée Maintenon, and we saw nothing of you but your letters. You 've only actually lived with us for two years, and you 've been like sunshine in the house.

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes, indeed.

THÉRÈSE. I 've thought this carefully over. I 'm twenty-three. I won't be a burden to you any longer.

GUÉRET. Is that because you are too proud and independent?

THÉRÈSE. If I thought I could really be of use to you, I would stay with you. If I could help you to face your troubles, I would stay with you. But I can't, and I mean to shift for myself.

MADAME GUÉRET. And you think you can "shift for yourself," as you call it, all alone?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, godmamma.

MADAME GUÉRET. A young girl, all alone, in Paris! The thing is inconceivable.

GUÉRET. But, my poor child, how do you propose to live?

THÉRÈSE. I 'll work.

MADAME GUÉRET. You don't mean that seriously?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, godmamma.

GUÉRET. You think you have only to ask for work and it will fall from the skies!

THÉRÈSE. I have a few dollars in my purse which will keep me until I have found something.

FÉLIAT. Your purse will be empty before you 've made a cent.

THÉRÈSE. I 'm sure it won't.

GUÉRET. Now, my dear, you 're tired, and nervous, and upset. You can't look at things calmly. We can talk about this again to-morrow.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, godpapa. But I shan't have changed my mind.

MADAME GUÉRET. I know you have a strong will of your own.

FÉLIAT. Let us talk sensibly and reasonably. You propose to live all alone in Paris. Good. Where will you live?

THÉRÈSE. I shall hire a little flat — or a room somewhere.

MADAME GUÉRET. Like a workgirl.

THÉRÈSE. Like a workgirl. There 's nothing to be ashamed of in that.

FÉLIAT. And you are going to earn your own living. How?

THÉRÈSE. I shall work. There 's nothing to be ashamed of in that, either.

GUÉRET. I see. But a properly brought up young lady does n't work for her living if she can possibly avoid it.

MADAME GUÉRET. And above all, a properly brought up young lady does n't live all alone.

THÉRÈSE. All the same —

MADAME GUÉRET. You are perfectly free. There 's no doubt about that. We have no power to prevent you from doing exactly as you choose.

GUÉRET. But your father left you in my care.

THÉRÈSE. Please, godmamma, don't be hard upon me. I feel you think I 'm ungrateful, though you don't say so. I know that often and often I shall long for your kindness and for the home where you 've given me a place. I 've shocked you. Do please forgive me. I 'm made like that, and made differently from you. I don't

say you 're not right; I only say I 'm different. Certain ideas have come to me from being educated at the Lycée and from all these books I 've read. I think I 'm able to earn my own living, and so I look upon it as my bounden duty not to trespass upon your charity. It 's a question of personal dignity. Don't you think that I 'm right, godfather? [*With a change of tone*] Besides, if I did go to Evreux with you, what should I do there?

GUÉRET. It 's pretty easy to guess.

MADAME GUÉRET. Yes, indeed.

GUÉRET. You would live with us.

MADAME GUÉRET [*not very kindly*] You would have a home.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, yes, I know all that; and it would be a great happiness. But what should I *do*?

GUÉRET. You would do what all well brought up young girls in your position do.

THÉRÈSE. You mean I should do nothing.

GUÉRET. Nothing! No, not nothing.

THÉRÈSE. Pay visits, practise a bit; some crochet and a little photography? That 's to say, nothing.

GUÉRET. You were brought up to that.

THÉRÈSE. I should never have dared to put it into words. But afterwards?

GUÉRET. Afterwards?

THÉRÈSE. How long would that last?

GUÉRET. Until you marry.

THÉRÈSE. I shall never marry.

GUÉRET. Why not?

THÉRÈSE [*very gently*] Oh, godfather, you know why not. I have no money. [*A silence*] So I 'm going to try and get work.

FÉLIAT. Work! Now, Thérèse, you know what women are like who try to earn their own living. You think you can support yourself. How?

THÉRÈSE. Perhaps I 'm mistaken, but I think I can support myself by my pen.

FÉLIAT. Be a bluestocking?

THÉRÈSE. Yes.

MADAME GUÉRET. That means a Bohemian life, with everything upside down, and a cigarette always between your lips.

THÉRÈSE [*laughing*] Neither Bohemia, nor the upside down, nor the cigarette are indispensable, godmother. Your information is neither firsthand nor up-to-date.

FÉLIAT. In a month's time you 'll want to give it up.

THÉRÈSE. Under those circumstances there 's no harm in letting me make the experiment.

GUÉRET. Now, my dear child, don't you know that even with your cleverness you may have to wait years before you make a penny. I 've been an editor. I know what I 'm talking about.

MADAME GUÉRET. She 's made up her mind, there 's no use saying any more.

FÉLIAT. But *I* want to talk to her now. Will you be so good as to listen to me, Mademoiselle Thérèse? [*To Madame Guéret*] I wonder if I might be allowed to have a few minutes with her alone.

MADAME GUÉRET. Most willingly.

GUÉRET [*to his wife*] Come, Marguerite.

MADAME GUÉRET. It 's no use making up your mind to the worst in these days; life always keeps a surprise for you. Let 's go. [*She goes out with her husband*]

FÉLIAT. My child, I have undertaken to say something to you that I fear will hurt you, and it 's very difficult. You know that I 'm only René's uncle by marriage. So it 's not on my own account that I speak. I speak for his parents.

THÉRÈSE. Don't say another word, Monsieur Féliat.

I perfectly understand. I 'm going to release him from his engagement. I shall write to him this very night.

FÉLIAT. My sister-in-law and her husband are most unhappy about all this.

THÉRÈSE. I 'm grateful to you all.

FÉLIAT. Their affection for you is not in any way diminished.

THÉRÈSE. I know.

FÉLIAT. And —

THÉRÈSE [*imploringly*] Please, *please,* Monsieur Féliat, don't say any more; what 's the good of it?

FÉLIAT. I beg your pardon, my dear. I am a little upset. I was expecting — er, er —

THÉRÈSE. Expecting what?

FÉLIAT. I expected some resistance on your part, perhaps indignation. It must be very hard for you; you were very fond of René.

THÉRÈSE. What 's the good of talking about that? Of course he can't marry me now that I 've not got a penny.

FÉLIAT. You know — as a matter of fact — I — my old-fashioned ideas — well, you go on surprising me. But this time my surprise is accompanied by — shall I say respect? — and by sympathy. I expected tears, which would have been very natural, because I know that your affection for René was very great.

THÉRÈSE. I can keep my tears to myself.

FÉLIAT. Yes — Oh, I — at least —

THÉRÈSE. Let 's consider it settled. Please don't talk to me about it any more.

FÉLIAT. Very well. Now will you allow me to say one word to you about your future?

THÉRÈSE. I shan't change my mind.

FÉLIAT. Perhaps not; all the same I want to advise you like — well, like an old uncle. For several years you have been spending your holidays with me at La

Tremblaye. And I have a real affection for you. So you 'll listen to me?

THÉRÈSE. With all my heart.

FÉLIAT. You 're making a mistake. Your ideas do you credit, but believe me, you 're laying up trouble for yourself in the future. [*She makes a movement to interrupt him*] Wait. I don't want to argue. I want you to listen to me, and I want to persuade you to follow my advice. Come to Evreux and you may be perfectly certain that you won't be left an old maid all your life. Even without money you 'll find a husband there. You 're too pretty, too charming, too well educated not to turn the head of some worthy gentleman. You made a sensation at the reception at the Préfecture. If you don't know that already, I tell you so.

THÉRÈSE. I 'm extremely flattered.

FÉLIAT. Do you know that if — well, if you decide to marry — I might —

THÉRÈSE. But I 've *not* decided to marry.

FÉLIAT. All right, all right, I am speaking about later on. Well, you 've seen Monsieur Baudoin and Monsieur Gambard —

THÉRÈSE. I have n't the slightest intention of —

FÉLIAT [*interrupting*] There 's no question of anything immediate. But for a person as wise and sensible as you are, the position of both the one and the other deserves —

THÉRÈSE. I know them both.

FÉLIAT. Yes; but —

THÉRÈSE. Now look here. If I had two hundred thousand francs, would you suggest that I should marry either of them?

FÉLIAT. Certainly not.

THÉRÈSE. There, you see.

FÉLIAT. But you 've *not* got two hundred thousand francs.

THÉRÈSE [*without showing any anger or annoyance*] The last thing I want is to be exacting. But really, Monsieur Féliat, think for a minute. If I were to marry a man I could not possibly love, I should marry him for his money. [*Looking straight at him*] And in that case the only difference between me and the women I am not supposed to know anything about would be that a little ceremony had been performed over me and not over them. Don't you agree with me?

FÉLIAT. But, my dear, you say such extraordinary things.

THÉRÈSE. Well, do you consider that less dishonoring than working? Honestly now, do you? I think that the best thing about women earning their living is that it 'll save them from being put into exactly that position.

FÉLIAT. The right thing for woman is marriage. That 's her proper position.

THÉRÈSE. It 's sometimes an unhappy one. [*A maid comes in bringing a card to Thérèse, who says*] Ask the lady kindly to wait a moment.

MAID. Yes, Mademoiselle. [*The maid goes out*]

FÉLIAT. Well, I 'm off. I shall go and see René. Then you 'll write to him?

THÉRÈSE. This very evening.

FÉLIAT. He 'll want to see you. My child, will you have the courage to resist him?

THÉRÈSE. You need n't trouble about that.

FÉLIAT. If he was mad enough to want to do without his parents' consent, they wish me to tell you that they would never speak to him again.

THÉRÈSE. I see.

FÉLIAT. That he would be a stranger to them. You understand all that that means?

THÉRÈSE [*discouraged*] Yes, yes; oh yes.

FÉLIAT. If you are not strong enough to stand out against his entreaties, you will be his ruin.

THÉRÈSE. I quite understand.

FÉLIAT. People would think very badly of you.

THÉRÈSE. Please don't say any more, I quite understand.

FÉLIAT. Then I may trust you?

THÉRÈSE. You may trust me.

FÉLIAT [*fatherly and approving*] Thank you. [*He holds out his hand*] Thérèse, you 're — well — you 're splendid. I like courage. I wish you success with all my heart. I really wish you success. But if, in the future, you should want a friend — the very strongest may find themselves in that position — let me be that friend.

THÉRÈSE [*taking the hand which Féliat holds out to her*] I 'm grateful, very grateful, Monsieur. Thank you. But I hope I shall be able to earn my own living. That is all I want.

FÉLIAT. I wish you every success. Good-bye, Mademoiselle.

THÉRÈSE. Good-bye, Monsieur. [*He goes out. She crosses to another door and brings in Madame Nérisse*] How good of you to come, dear Madame. Too bad you should have the trouble.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Nonsense, my dear. I wanted to come. I 'm so anxious to show you these two photographs and consult you about which we 're to publish. I expected to find you very tired.

THÉRÈSE. I am not the least tired, and I 'm delighted to see you.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*showing Thérèse the photographs*] This is more brilliant, that 's more dreamy. I like this one. What do you think?

THÉRÈSE. I like this one too.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Then that 's settled. [*Putting*

down the photographs] What a success you had this evening.

THÉRÈSE. Yes; people are very kind. [*Seriously*] I 'm so glad you 've come just now, dear Madame, so that we can have a few minutes' quiet talk. I have something most important to say to you.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Anything I can do for you?

THÉRÈSE. Well, I 'll explain. And please do talk to me quite openly and frankly.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I will indeed.

THÉRÈSE. You told me that my article was very much liked. I can quite believe that you may have exaggerated a little out of kindness to me. I want to know really whether you think I write well.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Dear Thérèse, ask Madame Guéret to tell you what I said to her just now about that very thing.

THÉRÈSE. Then you think my collaboration might be really useful to *Feminine Art*?

MADAME NÉRISSE. There 's nothing more useful to a paper like ours than the collaboration of girls in society.

THÉRÈSE. Would you like me to send you some more stories like the first?

MADAME NÉRISSE. As many as you can.

THÉRÈSE. And — [*She hesitates a moment*] and would you pay me the same price for them as for the one you 've just published?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes, exactly the same; and I shall be very glad to get them. I like your work; you have an exceptionally light touch; people won't get tired of reading your stuff.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, I hope that 's true! I 'm going to tell you some bad news. For family reasons my godfather and godmother are going to leave Paris. I shall stay here by myself, and I shall have to live by my pen.

MADAME NÉRISSE. What an idea!

THÉRÈSE. It 's not an idea, it 's a necessity.

MADAME NÉRISSE. What do you mean? A necessity? Monsieur Guéret —. But I must n't be inquisitive.

THÉRÈSE. You 're not inquisitive, and I 'll tell you all about it very soon; we have n't got time now. Can you promise to take a weekly article from me?

MADAME NÉRISSE [*with less confidence*] Certainly.

THÉRÈSE [*joyfully*] You can! Oh, thank you, thank you! I can't tell you how you 've relieved my mind.

MADAME NÉRISSE. My dear child. I am glad you 've spoken to me plainly. I will do everything I possibly can. I 'm extremely fond of you. I don't think the Directors will object.

THÉRÈSE. Why should they have anything to do with it?

MADAME NÉRISSE [*doubtfully*] Perhaps not, but — the Directors like to give each number a character of its own. It 's a thing they 're very particular about.

THÉRÈSE. I could write about very different subjects.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I know you could, but it would be always the same signature.

THÉRÈSE. Well, every now and then I might sign a fancy name.

MADAME NÉRISSE. That would be quite easy, and I don't think the Directors would mind. They might say it was a fresh name to make itself known and liked.

THÉRÈSE. We 'll try and manage it.

MADAME NÉRISSE. We shall have to fight against some jealousy. The Directors have protégées. The wife of one of them has been waiting to get an innings for more than two months. There are so many girls and women who write nowadays.

THÉRÈSE. Yes; but generally speaking their work is not worth much, I think.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Oh, I don't know that. There are a great many who have real talent. People don't realize what a lot of girls there are who have talent. But, still, if I 'm not able to take an article every week, you may rely upon me to take one as often as I possibly can. Oh, I shall make myself some enemies for your sake.

THÉRÈSE [*in consternation*] Enemies? How do you mean enemies?

MADAME NÉRISSE. My dear, it alters everything if you become a professional. Let me see if I can explain. We have our regular contributors. The editor makes them understand that they must expect to run the gantlet of the occasional competition of society women; because, if these women are allowed to write, it interests them and their families in the paper, and it 's an excellent advertisement for us. That 'll explain to you, by the way, why we sometimes publish articles not quite up to our standard. But if it 's a matter of regular, professional work, we have to be more careful. We have to respect established rights and consider people who 've been with us a long time. There is only a limited space in each number, and a lot of people have to live out of that.

THÉRÈSE [*who has gone quite white*] Yes, I see.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*who sees Thérèse's emotion*] How sorry I am for you! If you only knew how I feel for you! Don't look so unhappy. [*Thérèse makes a gesture of despair*] You 're not an ordinary girl, Thérèse, and it shall never be said that I did n't do all I could for you. Listen. I told you just now that I had some big projects in my mind. You shall know what they are. My husband and I are going to start an important weekly feminist paper on absolutely new lines.

It 's going to leave everything that 's been done up to now miles behind. My husband shall explain his ideas to you himself. It 'll be advanced and superior and all that, and at the same time most practical. Even to think of it has been a touch of genius. When you meet my husband you 'll find that he 's altogether out of the common. He 's so clever, and he 'd be in the very first rank in journalism if it was n't for the envy and jealousy of other men who 've intrigued against him and kept him down. I don't believe he has his equal in Paris as a journalist. I 'll read you some of his verses, and you 'll see that he 's a great poet too. But I shall run on forever. Only yesterday he got the last of the capital that 's needed for founding the paper; it 's been definitely promised. We 're ready to set about collecting our staff. We shall have leading articles, of course, and literary articles. Do you want me to talk to him about you?

THÉRÈSE. Of course I do. But —

MADAME NÉRISSE. We want to start a really smart, respectable woman's paper; of course without sacrificing our principles. Our title by itself proves that. It 's to be called *Woman Free.*

THÉRÈSE. I 'll give you my answer to-morrow — or this evening, if you like.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*hesitatingly*] Before I go — as we 're to be thrown a good deal together — I must tell you something about myself — a secret. I hope you won't care for me less when you know it. I call myself Madame Nérisse. But I have no legal right to the name. That 's why I 've always found some reason for not introducing Monsieur Nérisse to you and your people. He 's married — married to a woman who 's not worthy of him. She lives in an out-of-the-way place in the country and will not consent to a divorce. My dear Thérèse, it makes me very unhappy. I live

only for him. I don't think a woman can be fonder of a man than I am of him. He 's so superior to other men. But unfortunately I met him too late. I felt I ought to tell you this.

THÉRÈSE. Your telling me has added to my friendship for you. I can guess how unhappy you are. Probably I'll go this very evening to your house and see your husband and hear from him if he thinks I can be of use. Anyway, thank you very much.

MADAME NÉRISSE. And thank *you* for the way you take this. Good-bye for the present.

She goes out. Thérèse stands thinking for a moment, then René comes in. He is very much upset.

THÉRÈSE. René!

RENÉ. Thérèse, it can't be true! It 's not possible! It 's not all over — our love?

THÉRÈSE. We must be brave.

RENÉ. But I can't give you up.

THÉRÈSE. I 've lost every penny, René dear.

RENÉ. But I don't love you any the less for that. I can't give you up, Thérèse. I *can't* give you up. I love you, I love you.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, René, don't! I need all my courage to face this. Help me. Don't you see, your people will never consent now.

RENÉ. My uncle told me so. But I 'll see them. I 'll persuade them. I 'll explain to them.

THÉRÈSE. You know very well they never really liked me, and that they 'll be glad of this opportunity of breaking it off.

RENÉ. I don't know what to do. But I *cannot* give you up. What would become of me without you? You 're everything to me, everything. And suddenly — because of this dreadful thing — I must give up my whole life's happiness.

THÉRÈSE. Your people are quite right, René.

RENÉ. And you, *you* say that!

He hides his face in his hands. A silence.

THÉRÈSE [*gently removing his hands*] Look at me, René. You 're crying. Oh, my dear love!

RENÉ [*taking her in his arms*] I love you, I love you!

THÉRÈSE. And I love you. Oh, please don't cry any more! [*She kisses him*] René, dear, don't cry any more! You break my heart. I can't bear it. I 'm forgetting all I ought to say to you. [*Breaking down*] Oh, how dreadful this is! [*They cry together. Then she draws herself away from him, saying*] This is madness.

RENÉ. Ah, stay, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. No. We must n't do this; we must be brave. Oh, why did you come here? I was going to write to you. We 're quite helpless against this dreadful misfortune.

RENÉ. I don't know what to do! But I *can't* give you up.

THÉRÈSE [*to herself*] I must do the right thing. [*To him*] René, stop crying. Listen to me.

RENÉ. I love you.

THÉRÈSE. Yes; there 's our love. But besides that there 's life, and life is cruel and too strong for our love. There is your future, my dearest.

RENÉ. My future is to love you. My future is nothing if I lose you. [*He buries his face in his hands*]

THÉRÈSE. You can't marry a girl without any money. That 's a dreadful fact, like a stone wall. We shall only break ourselves to pieces if we dash ourselves against it. Listen, oh, please listen to me. Don't you hear what I 'm saying? René — dear.

RENÉ. I 'm listening.

THÉRÈSE. I give you your freedom without any bitterness or hardness,

RENÉ. I don't want it!

THÉRÈSE. Now listen. You must n't sacrifice your whole life for a love affair, no matter how great the love is.

RENÉ. It 's by losing you I shall sacrifice my life.

THÉRÈSE. Try and be brave; control yourself. Let us face this quietly. Suppose we do without your people's consent. What will become of us? Try to look the thing in the face. How should we live? René, it 's horrible to bring our love down to the level of these miserable realities, but facts are facts. You know very well that if you marry me without your father and mother's consent, they won't give you any money. Is n't that so?

RENÉ. Oh! father is hard.

THÉRÈSE. He 's quite right, my dear, quite right. If I was your sister, I should advise you not to give up the position you have been brought up in and the profession you 've been educated for.

RENÉ. But I love you.

THÉRÈSE [*moved*] And I love you. Well, we 've got to forget one another.

RENÉ. That 's impossible.

THÉRÈSE. We must be wise enough to— [*She stops, her voice breaks*]

RENÉ. Oh! how unhappy I am.

THÉRÈSE [*controlling herself*] Don't let yourself go. We 're not in dreamland. If you keep on saying "I am unhappy," you 'll be unhappy.

RENÉ. I love you so. Oh, Thérèse, how I love you!

THÉRÈSE [*softly*] You 'll forget me.

RENÉ. Never.

THÉRÈSE. Yes. You 'll remember me in a way, of course. But you 're young. Very soon you 'll be able to live, to laugh, to love, to work.

RENÉ. My dearest! I don't know what to say. I

can't talk of it. I only know one thing — I can't let you go.

THÉRÈSE. But we should be miserable, René.

RENÉ. Miserable *together!*

THÉRÈSE. Think, dear, think. It will be years before you can earn your own living, won't it?

RENÉ. But I —

THÉRÈSE. Now you know you've tried already. Only last year you wanted to leave home and be independent, and you had to go back because you were starving. Isn't that true?

RENÉ. It's dreadful, dreadful! [*He is overcome, terrified*]

THÉRÈSE. So we must look at life as it is, practically, mustn't we? We have to have lodging and furniture and clothes. How are we to manage?

RENÉ. It's dreadful!

THÉRÈSE. How would you bear to see me going about in rags? [*He is silent. She waits, looking at him, hoping for a word of strength or courage. It does not come. She draws herself up slowly, her face hardening*] You can't face that, can you? Tell me. Can you face that?

RENÉ. No.

THÉRÈSE [*humiliated by his want of courage and infected by his weakness*] So you see, I'm right.

RENÉ [*sobbing*] Oh! Oh!

THÉRÈSE. [*setting her teeth*] Oh, can you do nothing but cry?

RENÉ. What a useless creature I am.

THÉRÈSE. There, now, you see you're better!

RENÉ. I'm ashamed of being so good-for-nothing.

THÉRÈSE [*hopeless*] You're just like all the others. Now, don't be miserable. I'm not angry with you; you are doing what I told you we must do, and you agree. Go, René. Say good-bye. Good-bye, René.

RENÉ. Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE [*her nerves on edge*] Everything we can say is useless, and it 'll only torture and humiliate us. We must end this — now — at once.

RENÉ. I shall always love you, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. Yes — exactly — now go.

RENÉ. Oh, my God!

THÉRÈSE. Go.

RENÉ. I 'll go and see my people. They 'll never be so cruel —

THÉRÈSE. Yes, yes, all right.

RENÉ. I 'll write you.

THÉRÈSE. Yes — that 's it — you 'll write.

RENÉ. I shall see you again, Thérèse? [*He goes slowly to the door*]

THÉRÈSE [*ashamed for him, covers her face with her hands. Then, all of a sudden, she bursts out into passionate sobs, having lost all control of herself, and cries wildly*] René!

RENÉ [*returning, shocked*] Thérèse! Oh, what is it?

THÉRÈSE [*completely at the mercy of her feelings*] Suppose — suppose after all, we *did* it? Listen. I love you far more than you know, more than I have ever let you know. A foolish feeling of self-respect made me hide a lot from you. Trust me. Trust your future to me. Marry me all the same. Believe in me. Marry me. You don't know how strong I am and all the things I can do. I will work, and you will work. You did n't get on when you were alone, but you will when you have me with you. I 'll keep you brave when things go badly, and I 'll be happy with you when they go right. René, I 'll be content with so little! The simplest, humblest, hardest life, until we 've made our way together — *together*, René, and conquered a place in the world for ourselves, that we 'll owe to no one but ourselves. Let us

have courage — [*At this point she looks at him, and having looked she ceases to speak*]

RENÉ. Thérèse, I 'm sure my people will give in.

THÉRÈSE [*after a very long silence, inarticulately*] Go, go; poor René. Forget what I said. Good-bye.

RENÉ. Oh, no! not good-bye. I 'll make my father help us.

THÉRÈSE [*sharply*] Too late, my friend. I don't want you now.

She leaves the room. René sinks into a chair and covers his face with his hands.

ACT II

SCENE: — *A sitting-room at the offices of "Woman Free." The door at the back opens into an entrance hall. The general editorial office is to the right, Monsieur Nérisse's room to the left. At the back, also to the left, is another door opening into a smaller sitting-room. There are papers and periodicals upon the tables.*

The curtain rises upon Monsieur Mafflu. He is a man of about fifty, dressed for ease rather than elegance, and a little vulgar. He turns over the papers on the tables, studies himself in the mirror, and readjusts his tie. Madame Nérisse then comes in. She has Monsieur Mafflu's visiting card in her hand. They bow to each other.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. My card will have informed you that I am Monsieur Mafflu.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes. Won't you sit down?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. I am your new landlord, Madame. I have just bought this house. I 've retired from business. I was afraid I should n't have enough to do, so I 've bought some houses. I am my own agent. It gives me something to do. If a tenant wants repairs done, I go and see him. I love a bit of a gossip; it passes away an hour or so. In that way I make people's acquaintance — nice people. I did n't buy any of the houses where poor people live, though they 're better business. I should never have had the heart to turn out the ones that did n't pay, and I should

have been obliged to start an agent, and all my plan would have been upset. [*A pause*] Now, Madame, for what brought me here. I hope you 'll forgive me for the trouble I 'm giving you — and I 'm sorry — but I 've come to give you notice.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Indeed! May I ask what your reason is?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. I am just on the point of letting the second floor. My future tenant has young daughters.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I 'm afraid I don't see what that has got to do with it.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Well — he 'll live only in a house in which all the tenants are private families.

MADAME NÉRISSE. But we make no noise. We are not in any way objectionable.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Oh, no, no; not at all.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Well, then?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. How shall I explain? I 'm certain you 're perfectly all right, and all the ladies who are with you here too, but I 've had to give in that house property is depreciated by people that work; all the more if the people are ladies, and most of all if they 're ladies who write books or bring out a newspaper with such a name as *Woman Free*. People who know nothing about it think from such a name — oh, bless you, I understand all that 's rubbish, but — well — the letting value of the house, you see. [*He laughs*]

MADAME NÉRISSE. The sight of women who work for their living offends these people, does it?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Yes, that 's the idea. A woman who works is always a little — hum — well — you know what I mean. Of course I mean nothing to annoy you.

MADAME NÉRISSE. You mean that your future tenants don't want their young ladies to have our example before them.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. No! That 's just what they don't. Having independent sort of people like you about makes 'em uneasy. For me, you know, I would n't bother about it — only — of course you don't see it this way, but you 're odd — off the common somehow. You make one feel queer.

MADAME NÉRISSE. But there are plenty of women who work.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Oh, common women, yes; oh, that 's all right.

MADAME NÉRISSE. If you have children, they have nurses and governesses.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Oh, those. They work, of course. They work for me, that 's quite different. But you — What bothers these ladies, Madame Maffiu and all the others, is that you 're in our own class. As for me I stick to the old saying, "Woman's place is the home."

MADAME NÉRISSE. But there are women who have got no home.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. That 's their own fault.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Very often it 's not at all their own fault. Where are they to go? Into the streets?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. I know, I know. There 's all that. Still women can work without being feminists.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Have you any idea what you mean by "feminist"?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Not very clear. I know the people I live among don't know everything. I grant you all that. But *Woman Free! Woman Free!* Madame Maffiu wants to know what liberty — or what liberties — singular or plural; do you take me? — ha! ha! There might be questions asked.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*laughing*] You must do me the honor of introducing me to Madame Maffiu. She must be an interesting woman. I 'll go and see her.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Oh, do! But not on a Wednesday.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Why not?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. 'Cos Wednesday 's her day.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*gayly*] I must give it up, then, as I 'm free only on Wednesdays.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. I should like her to see for herself how nice you are. Her friends have been talking to her. They thought that you — well — they say feminist women are like the women were in the time of the Commune. They said perhaps you 'd even go on a deputation!

MADAME NÉRISSE. You would n't approve of that?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Oh, talkin' of that, one of my friends has an argument nobody can answer. "Let these women," he says, "let 'em do their military service."

MADAME NÉRISSE. Well, you tell him that if men make wars, women make soldiers; and get killed at that work too, sometimes.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU [*after reflecting for some moments*] I 'll tell him, but he won't understand.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Well, no matter. I won't detain you any longer, Monsieur Mafflu.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Oh! Madame. I should like to stay and talk to you for hours.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*laughing*] You 're too kind.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Then you forgive me?

MADAME NÉRISSE [*going to the door with him*] What would one not forgive you?

MONSIEUR MAFFLU [*turning back*] I say —

MADAME NÉRISSE. No, no. Good-bye, Monsieur.

MONSIEUR MAFFLU. Good-bye, Madame.

He goes out.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*to herself*] One really could n't be angry!

Thérèse comes in with a little moleskin bag on her arm. She is in a light dress, is very gay, and looks younger.

THÉRÈSE. Good-morning, Madame. I 'm so sorry to be late. I met Monsieur Féliat, my godmother's brother.

MADAME NÉRISSE. How is Madame Guéret?

THÉRÈSE. Very well, he says.

MADAME NÉRISSE. And does Monsieur Guéret like his new home?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, very much.

MADAME NÉRISSE. And Madame Guéret?

THÉRÈSE. She seems to be quite happy.

MADAME NÉRISSE. What a good thing. Here 's the letter Monsieur Nérisse has written for you to that editor. [*She hands her an unsealed letter*]

THÉRÈSE. Oh, thank you!

MADAME NÉRISSE. Did you find out when he could see you?

THÉRÈSE. To-morrow at two o'clock. Can you spare me then?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes, certainly.

THÉRÈSE. Thank you.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Why don't you read your letter? You see it 's open.

THÉRÈSE. I 'll shut it up.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Read it.

THÉRÈSE. Shall I?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes, do.

THÉRÈSE [*reading*] Oh, it 's too much. This is too kind. With a letter like this my article is certain to be read. Monsieur Nérisse *is* kind! Will you tell him how very grateful I am?

MADAME NÉRISSE [*coldly*] Yes. [*She makes an effort to be kind*] I 'll tell him, of course. But I dictated the letter myself. Monsieur Nérisse only signed it. [*She rings*]

THÉRÈSE. Then I have one more kindness to thank you for.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*to the page boy*] I expect Monsieur Cazarès.

BOY. Monsieur — ?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Our old editor — Monsieur Cazarès. You know him very well.

BOY. Oh, yes, Madame, yes!

MADAME NÉRISSE. He will have another gentleman with him. You must show them straight into Monsieur Nérisse's room and let me know.

BOY. Yes, Madame.

During this conversation Thérèse has taken off her hat and put it into a cupboard. She has opened a green cardboard box and put her gloves and veil into it — folding the latter carefully — also Monsieur Nérisse's letter. She has taken out a little mirror, given some touches to her hair, and has put it back. Finally she closes the box.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Monsieur Cazarès is bringing us a new backer. We're going to make changes in the paper. I'll tell you all about it presently. [*With a change of tone*] Tell me, what was there between you and Monsieur Cazarès?

THÉRÈSE [*simply*] Nothing at all.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Isn't he just a wee bit in love with you?

THÉRÈSE. I haven't the least idea. He's said nothing to me about it, if he is.

MADAME NÉRISSE. He's always behaved quite nicely to you?

THÉRÈSE. Always.

MADAME NÉRISSE. And Monsieur Nérisse?

THÉRÈSE. Monsieur Nérisse? I don't understand.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Oh, yes, you do. Has he ever made love to you?

THÉRÈSE [*hurt*] Oh, Madame!

MADAME NÉRISSE [*looking closely at her and then taking both her hands affectionately*] Forgive me, dear child. I know how good and straight you are. You must n't mind the things I say. Sometimes I 'm horrid I know. I have an idea that Monsieur Nérisse is not as fond of me as he used to be.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, indeed that 's only your fancy.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I hope so. I 'm a bit nervous I think. I 've such a lot of trouble with the paper just now. It 's not going well. [*Gesture of Thérèse*] We 're going to try something fresh. This time I think it 'll be all right. You 'll see it will. [*A pause*] What 's that? Did he call? I 'm sure that idiot of a boy has n't made up his fire, and he 'd never think of it. He 's like a great baby. [*As she goes towards Monsieur Nérisse's door — the door on the left — the door on the right opens, and Mademoiselle Grégoire comes in. She has taken off her hat. Madame Nérisse turns to her*] Why, it 's Mademoiselle Grégoire! You know, *Dr.* Grégoire! [*To Mademoiselle Grégoire*] This is Mademoiselle Thérèse. [*They shake hands*] I spoke to you about her. She 'll explain everything to you in no time. I 'll come back very soon and introduce you to the others. Excuse me for a minute. [*She goes out to the left*]

THÉRÈSE [*pleasantly*] I really don't know what Madame Nérisse wants me to explain to you. You know our paper?

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. No, I 've never seen it.

THÉRÈSE. Never seen it! Never seen *Woman Free*?

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Never. I only know it by name.

THÉRÈSE. How odd! Well, here 's a copy. It 's in two parts, you see, and they 're quite different from

each other. Here the doctrine, there the attractions. Madame Nérisse thought of that.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE [*reading as she turns over the leaves*] "Votes for Women."

THÉRÈSE [*reading with her*] "Votes for Women," "An End of Slavery." And then, on here, lighter things.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Frivolities?

THÉRÈSE. Frivolities. A story. "Beauty Notes."

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE [*reading and laughing a little*] "The Doctor's Page."

THÉRÈSE. Oh, too bad! But it was n't I who first said frivolities!

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE [*still laughing*] I shall bear up. And what comes after "The Doctor's Page"?

THÉRÈSE. "Beauty Notes" and "Gleanings."

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Gleanings?

THÉRÈSE. Yes. It 's a column where real and imaginary subscribers exchange notes about cookery receipts, and housekeeping tips, and hair lotions, and that sort of thing.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Quite a good thing.

THÉRÈSE. I must confess it 's the best read part.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. I 'm not at all surprised.

THÉRÈSE. I 'm afraid we can't conceal from ourselves that Monsieur Nérisse has not altogether succeeded. Each of us is inclined to like only her own section. We 've a girl here, Caroline Legrand, one of the staff, who 's tremendously go-a-head. You should hear her on the subject of "Soap of the Sylphs" and "Oriental Balm."

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. It makes her furious?

THÉRÈSE. She 's a sort of rampageous saint; ferocious and affectionate by turns, a bit ridiculous perhaps, but delightful and generous. She 's so simple nasty people could easily make a fool of her, but all nice people like her.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Shall I have much to do with her?

THÉRÈSE. Not much. You 'll be under Mademoiselle de Meuriot, and you 'll be lucky. She 's a dear. She 's been sacrificing herself all her life. She's my great friend — the only one I have.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE [*taking up the paper again*] But how 's this? Your contributors are all men. Gabriel de —, Camille de —, Claud de —, René de —, Marcel de —.

THÉRÈSE. Well! I never noticed that before. They 're the pen-names of our writers.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. All men's names?

THÉRÈSE. Yes. People still think more of men as writers. You see they are names that might be either a man's or a woman's. Camille, René, Gabriel.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. There 's only one woman's name — Vicomtesse de Renneville.

THÉRÈSE. That 's snobbery! It 's Madame Nérisse's pen-name.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Well, I suppose it 's good business.

Mademoiselle de Meuriot comes in at the back, bringing a packet of letters.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. The post 's come, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. This is Mademoiselle de Meuriot. [*Introducing Mademoiselle Grégoire*] Our new contributor.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. You 're welcome, Mademoiselle.

The door on the left opens and Madame Nérisse appears backwards, still talking to Monsieur Nérisse, who is invisible in the inner room.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes, dearest. Yes, dearest. Yes, dearest.

Mademoiselle Grégoire looks up at Madame Nérisse.

Mademoiselle de Meuriot and Thérèse turn away their heads to hide their smiles; finally Madame Nérisse shuts the door, not having noticed anything, and comes forward. She speaks to Mademoiselle Grégoire.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Come, my dear. I 'll introduce you to the others. [*To Mademoiselle de Meuriot*] Ah! the post has come. Open the letters, Thérèse, will you?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Yes, we will.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*at the door on the right, to Mademoiselle Grégoire*] You first. [*They go out*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*smiling*] I think our new friend was a bit amused. She 's pretty.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, and she looks capable.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Let 's get to work.

She sits down at a desk. Thérèse sits near her at the end of the same desk. During all that follows Thérèse opens envelopes with a letter opener and passes them to Mademoiselle de Meuriot, who takes the letters out, glances at them, and makes three or four little piles of them.

THÉRÈSE. Here! [*Holding out the first letter*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*as she works*] And you? How are you this morning? [*Looking closely at her and shaking a finger*] You 're tired, little girl. You sat up working last night.

THÉRÈSE. I wanted to finish copying out my manuscript. It took me ages, because I wanted to make it as clear as print.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*gravely*] You know you must n't be ill, Thérèse.

THÉRÈSE. How good you are, Mademoiselle, and how lucky I am to have you for a friend. What should I do without you?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. How about your godmother?

THÉRÈSE. I didn't get on with her. She never could hide her dislike for me, and it burst out in the end. When she saw that in spite of everything she could say I was going to leave her, she let herself go and made a dreadful scene. And, what was worse, my good, kind godfather joined in! It seemed as if they thought my wanting to be independent was a direct insult to them. What a lot of letters there are to-day.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. It 's the renewal of the subscriptions.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, is that it? So you see we parted, not exactly enemies — but, well — on our dignity. We write little letters to one another now, half cold and half affectionate. I tell you, without you I should be quite alone.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Not more alone than I am.

THÉRÈSE. I have someone to talk to now and tell my little worries to. It 's not that, even. One always finds people ready to listen to you and pity you, but what one does n't find is people one can tell one's most impossible dreams to and feel sure one won't be laughed at. That 's real friendship. [*She stops working as she continues*] To dare to think out loud before another person and let her see the gods of one's secret idolatry, and to be sure one 's not exposing one's precious things to blasphemy. How I love you for being like you are and for caring for me a little. [*She resumes her work*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. I don't care for you a little, Thérèse! I care for you very much indeed. I like you because you 're brave and hurl yourself against obstacles like a little battering ram, and because you 're straight and honest and one can depend on you.

THÉRÈSE [*who can't get open the letter she holds*] Please pass me the scissors. Thanks. [*She cuts open*

the envelope] I might have been all those things, and it would have been no good at all, if you had n't been able to see them.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Remember that in being friends with you I get as much as I give. My people were very religious and very proud of their title. I made up my mind to leave home, but since then I 've been quite alone — alone for thirty years. I 'm selfish in my love for you now. I 've had so little of that sort of happiness.

THÉRÈSE. You 've done so much for women. You 've helped so many.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*touching her piles of letters*] Here 's another who won't renew.

THÉRÈSE. What will Madame Nérisse say? [*Continuing*] You know, Mademoiselle, it 's not only success that I want. I have a great ambition. I should like to think that because I 've lived there might be a little less suffering in the world. That 's the sort of thing that I can say to nobody but you.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*tenderly*] Thérèse has an ardent soul.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, Thérèse has an ardent soul. It was you who said that about me first, and I think I deserve it. [*Changing her tone*] Here 's the subscriber's book. [*She hands the book and continues in her former voice*] Like Guyau, I have more tears than I need to spend on my own sufferings, so I can give the spare ones to other people. And not only tears, but courage and consolation that I have no opportunity of using up myself. Do you understand what I mean?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Yes, I understand, my dear. I see my own youth over again. [*Sadly*] Oh, I hope that you — but I don't want to rouse up those old ghosts; I should only distress you. Perhaps lives like mine are necessary, if it 's only to throw into relief

lives that are more beautiful than mine. Keep your lovely dreams. [*A silence*] When I think that instead of being an old maid I might have been the mother of a girl like you!

THÉRÈSE [*leaning towards her and kissing her hair*] Don't cry.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*tears in her eyes and a smile upon her lips*] No, no, I won't; and when I think that somewhere or other there's a man you love!

THÉRÈSE [*smiling*] Some day or other I must tell you a whole lot of things about René.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Have you seen him again?

THÉRÈSE. Yes.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. But you were supposed not to meet any more.

THÉRÈSE [*with a mutinous little smile*] Yes, we were supposed not to meet any more. One says those things and then one meets all the same. If René had gone on being the feeble and lamentable young man that I parted from the *Barberine* evening, I should perhaps have never seen him again. You don't know what my René has done, do you now?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. No.

THÉRÈSE. I've been looking forward so to telling you. [*Eagerly*] Well, he's quite changed. He's become a different man. Oh, he's not a marvel of energy even yet, but he's not the helpless youth who was still feeding out of his father's hands at twenty-five.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. And how has this great improvement come about?

THÉRÈSE [*looking at her knowingly*] You'll make me blush.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Was it for love of you?

THÉRÈSE. I think it *was* for love of me. Let me tell you. He wanted to see me again, and he waited at the door when I was coming out from my work, just as if I was a little milliner's assistant. And then he came back another evening, and then another. While we were walking from here to my place we chattered, and chattered, and chattered. We had more to say to each other than we 'd ever had before, and I began to realize that his want of will and energy was more the result of always hanging on to his people than anything else. Then there came a crash. [*She laughs*] A most fortunate crash. His father formally ordered him not to see me again; threatened, if he did, to stop his allowance. What do you think my René did? He sent back the cheque his people had just given him with quite a nice, civil, respectful letter. Then he left his office and got a place in a business house at an absurdly small salary, and he 's been working there ever since. [*Laughing*] He shocked all the other young men in the office by the way he stuck to it. He got gradually interested in what he had to do. He read it all up; the heads of the firm noticed him and were civil to him, and now they 've sent him on important business to Tunis. And that 's what he 's done all for love of me! Now, don't you think I ought to care for him a little? Don't you?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Yes, my dear. But then if he 's in Tunis?

THÉRÈSE. Oh, he 'll come back.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. And when will the wedding be?

THÉRÈSE. He 's sure his people will give in in the end if he can make some money. We shall wait.

The page boy comes in with seven or eight round parcels in his arms.

BOY. Here are this morning's manuscripts.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Put them with the others.

BOY. There was one lady was quite determined to see you herself. She said her article was most particular. It 's among that lot.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Very well.

BOY. Mademoiselle Caroline Legrand is coming.

He opens the door and stands back to allow Caroline Legrand to come in. She is dressed in a long brown tailor-made overcoat and a white waistcoat, with a yellow necktie.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Good-morning, Meuriot.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Good-morning, Caroline Legrand. [*They shake hands*]

CAROLINE LEGRAND. It seems there 's something new going on here.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. I believe there is, but I know nothing about it.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. I expect the paper 's not going well, the jam has n't hidden the pill. Even Madame Nérisse's thirtieth article upon divorce at the desire of one party has n't succeeded in stirring up enthusiasm this time. She 's been preaching up free love, but she really started the paper only because she thought it would help her to get the law changed and allow her to marry her "dearest."

THÉRÈSE. Mademoiselle Legrand, I have some news that will please you.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Are all the men dead?

THÉRÈSE. No, not yet; but I 've heard that in a small country town they 're starting a Woman's Trade Union.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. It won't succeed. Women are too stupid.

THÉRÈSE. They 've opened a special workshop there, and they 're going to have work that 's always been done by men done by women.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. That 's splendid! A woman worker the more is a slave the less.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*gravely*] Are you quite sure of that?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Oh, don't you misunderstand me! [*Forcibly*] Listen to this. A time will come when people will be as ashamed of having made women work as they are ashamed now of having kept slaves. But, until then —

THÉRÈSE. The employer is rather disturbed about it.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. He 's quite right. Very soon there 'll be a fierce reaction among the men about this cheap women's labor. There 's going to be a new sex struggle — the struggle for bread. Man will use all his strength and all his cruelty to defend himself. There 's a time coming when gallantry and chivalry will go by the board, *I* can tell you.

Madame Nérisse comes in.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Oh, good-morning, Legrand. I 'm glad you 're here. I 've been wanting to ask your advice about a new idea I want to start in *Woman Free.* A correspondence about getting up a league of society women —

CAROLINE LEGRAND. What about the others?

MADAME NÉRISSE [*continuing, without attending to her*] — and smart people, who will undertake not to wear ornaments in their hats made of the wings or the plumage of birds.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. You 're giving up *Woman Free* for *Birds Free,* then?

MADAME NÉRISSE. What do you mean?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. You 'd better make a league to do away with hats altogether as a protest against the sweating of the women who stitch the straw at famine prices and make the ribbon at next to nothing. I shall be more concerned for the fate of the sparrows when

I have n't got to concern myself about the fate of sweated women.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Well, of course. That 's the article we 've got to write.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Of course.

MADAME NÉRISSE. We 'll write it in the form of a letter to a member of parliament — it had better be a man, because we 're going to put him in the wrong — a member of parliament who wants to form the league I suggested. What you said about the sparrows will be a splendid tag at the end. Will you write it?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Rather! It 's lucky you don't stick to your ideas very obstinately, because they can sometimes be improved upon. I think I shall write your paper for you in future.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Go along and send me in Mademoiselle Grégoire and Madame Chanteuil. They 'll bother you, and I want them here.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. To write about "Soap of the Sylphs." *I* know.

She goes out to the right.

MADAME NÉRISSE. She 's a little mad, but she really has good ideas sometimes.

The page boy comes in.

BOY [*to Madame Nérisse*] The gentlemen are there, Monsieur Cazarès and another gentleman.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Are they with Monsieur Nérisse?

BOY. Yes, Madame.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Very well, I 'll go. [*The boy goes out. She speaks to the others*] Divide the work between you. [*To Madame Chanteuil and Mademoiselle Grégoire, who come in from the right*] There 's lots of work to be done. [*She goes out to the left*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. We 'd better sit down. [*She sits down and says what follows whilst they are*

taking their places round the table. She takes up the first letter] This is for the advertising department. Is Mademoiselle Baron here?

THÉRÈSE. No, poor little thing. She 's trudging round Paris to try and get hold of a few advertisements.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. It 's a dreadful job, trying to get advertisements for a paper that three-quarters of the people she goes to have never heard of. It gives me the shivers to remember what I had to go through myself over that job.

THÉRÈSE. And poor little Baron is so shy!

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. She earned only fifty francs all last month.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. I know her, I met her lately; she told me she was in luck, that she had an appointment with the manager of the Institut de Jouvence.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. And she thinks she 's in luck!

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. It appears that that 's a place where you can do quite good business.

MADAME CHANTEUIL [*gravely*] Yes, young women can do business there if they 're pretty; but have you any idea what price they pay? Nothing would induce me to put my foot inside the place again.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Oh, the poor little girl! Oh, dear! [*A pause. She begins to sort the letters*]

THÉRÈSE [*half to herself*] It seems to me our name *Woman Free* is horrible irony.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*holding a letter in her hand*] Oh, Chanteuil, what *have* you done? Here 's somebody perfectly furious. She says she asked you to give her some information in the beauty column. [*Reading*] It was something she was mistaken about. She wrote under the name of "Always Young," and apparently you 've answered "Always Young is a mis-

take." She thinks you did it to insult her. You must write her a letter of apologies.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. Yes, Mademoiselle.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*holding up another letter*] "Little Questions of Sentiment." This is for you, Thérèse. [*She reads*] "I feel so sad because I am getting old," etc. Answer, "Why this sadness —"

THÉRÈSE. "White hairs are a crown of —" [*She writes a few words in pencil upon the letter which Mademoiselle de Meuriot has passed to her*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. "Astral Influences." [*Looking round*] Who is "Astral Influences"?

MADAME CHANTEUIL. I am.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*passing her letters*] Here are two, three — one without a post office order. Put that one straight into the waste paper basket. Remember that you must always promise them luck, with little difficulties to give success more flavor. And be sure to tell them they 're full of good qualities, with some little amiable weaknesses and the sort of defects one enjoys boasting about. [*Going on reading*] "About using whites of eggs to take the sharpness out of sorrel," "To take out ink-stains." These are for you, dear.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Yes. [*She takes the letters*] I did n't think of that when I took my degree.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*continuing*] "Stoutness"; that 's for you too. [*Glancing again at the letter*] What does this one want? [*Fluttering the leaves*] Four pages; ah, here we are — "A slender figure — smaller hips — am not too stout anywhere else." That 's for the doctor. [*She gives the letter to Mademoiselle Grégoire with several others*]

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Iodiform soap.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. My dear, not at all, "Soap of the Sylphs."

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. But that's exactly the same thing.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. I know that. But it sounds so different. [*Taking another letter*] "A red nose"—

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. Lemon juice.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*continuing*] "Superfluous hairs." Be sure to recommend the cream that gives us advertisements; don't make any mistake about that. "Black specks on the chin," "Wrinkles round the eyes."

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. There's no cure for that.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. Tell her to go to bed early and alone.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. That's too easy, she would n't believe in it. Find something else. [*Continuing to read*] "To make them firm without enlarging them"; that's for you too. And all the rest I think. "To whiten the teeth," "To make the hair lighter," "To give firmness to the bust."

MADAME CHANTEUIL. They're always asking that.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*reading*] "To enlarge the eyes," "get rid of wrinkles"—"and double chins"—"a clear complexion"—"to keep young"—ouf! That's all. No, here's one that wants white arms. They're all alike, poor women!

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. And all that to please men.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. To please a man more than some other woman, and so to be fed, lodged, and kept by him.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE [*between her teeth*] *Kept* is the right word.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Ah, here's Mademoiselle Baron. [*To Mademoiselle Baron*] Well? What luck?

MADEMOISELLE BARON [*miserably*] There 's no one in the office. I 've got the signed contract for the advertisements of the Institut de Jouvence. Now I must go on to the printers. Here it is. Good-bye. [*A silence*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*in a suffocated voice*] Good-bye, my dear.

They watch her go sadly. A long silence.

THÉRÈSE [*speaking with great emotion*] Poor, *poor* little thing!

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*also quite overcome, slowly*] Perhaps she has someone at home who 's hungry.

They each respond by a sigh or an ouf! Mademoiselle Grégoire, Madame Chanteuil, and Mademoiselle de Meuriot rise, picking up their papers.

MADEMOISELLE GRÉGOIRE. I must go and see to the "Doctor's Page."

MADAME CHANTEUIL. And I to the "Gleaner's Column."

They go out to the right. Thérèse rests her chin on her two hands and reflects profoundly. Monsieur Nérisse comes in at the back.

NÉRISSE [*speaking back to the people he has left in his office in an irritated voice*] Do as you like. I 've told you my opinion. I wash my hands of it. When your draft is ready show it to me. [*He shuts the door. Thérèse, when she hears his voice, has gathered up her papers and is making for the door on the right. He calls her back*] Mademoiselle!

THÉRÈSE. Monsieur!

NÉRISSE. Listen. I have something to say to you. [*Thérèse returns*] Did Madame Nérisse give you the letter of introduction I wrote for you?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, Monsieur. Please forgive me for not having thanked you before.

NÉRISSE. It 's nothing.

THÉRÈSE. Indeed it 's a great deal.

NÉRISSE. Nothing.

THÉRÈSE. Yes. I 'm sure to be received quite differently with that letter from what I should be without it.

NÉRISSE. I can give you any number of letters like that. May I?

THÉRÈSE [*coldly*] No, thank you.

NÉRISSE. You won't let me?

THÉRÈSE. No.

NÉRISSE. Why?

THÉRÈSE. You know very well why.

NÉRISSE. You 're still angry with me. You do yourself harm by the way you treat me, you do indeed. Listen, this is the sort of thing. Moranville, the editor of the review I was talking about, is going to meet me at my restaurant after dinner. I know he wants just such stories as you write. But Moranville reads only the manuscripts of people he knows — he has a craze about it. Well, I hardly dare propose to you a thing which nevertheless is perfectly natural among colleagues, to come and dine with me first and meet him after. I hardly like — [*Thérèse draws herself up*] You see, I 'm right. You don't trust me.

THÉRÈSE. On the contrary, I 'll go gladly. Madame Nérisse will be with you of course?

NÉRISSE [*annoyed*] Madame Nérisse! Nonsense! Do you suppose I drag her everywhere I go? Say no more about it. Whatever I say will only make you suspicious. [*With a sigh*] All this misunderstanding and suspicion is horrible to me. How stupid the world is! There are times when I feel disgusted with everything, myself included! I 'm getting old. I 'm a failure. I 'm losing my time and wasting my life over this ridiculous paper, which will never be anything but an obscure rag. I shall have done for myself soon.

THÉRÈSE [*awkwardly, for something to say*] Don't say that.

NÉRISSE. Yes, I shall. I might have a chance of saving myself yet if I took things energetically and got free of the whole thing. But I should have to be quick about it. [*A silence. Thérèse does not know what to say and does not dare to leave the room*] I 'm so low — so unhappy!

THÉRÈSE. So unhappy?

NÉRISSE. Yes. [*Another silence. Madame Nérisse comes in and looks at them pointedly*] Are they gone?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes, they 're gone.

NÉRISSE. Is it all settled?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes. I am to meet them at the bank at four. But they would n't give way on the question of reducing expenses as regards the contributors.

NÉRISSE. And the dates of publication?

MADAME NÉRISSE. We are to come out fortnightly instead of weekly. [*Indicating the door on the right*] You must go and speak to them.

NÉRISSE. Is Thérèse's salary to be reduced too?

MADAME NÉRISSE. It would be impossible to make distinctions.

NÉRISSE. Difficult, yes. Still — I think one might have managed to do something for her.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I cannot see how she differs from the others. Can you?

NÉRISSE. Oh, well — say no more about it.

MADAME NÉRISSE. That will be best. [*He goes out to the right. To herself*] I should think so indeed! [*To Thérèse*] While Monsieur Nérisse was talking to the other man I had a chat with Monsieur Cazarès. He was talking about you. He 's a nice fellow, and it 's quite a good family you know. He 's steady and fairly well off — very well off.

THÉRÈSE [*laughing*] You talk as if you were offering me a husband!

NÉRISSE. And what would you say supposing he had asked me to sound you?

THÉRÈSE. I should say that I was very much obliged, but that I decline the honor.

NÉRISSE. What 's wrong with him?

THÉRÈSE. Nothing.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Well then?

THÉRÈSE. You can't marry upon that.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Have you absolutely made up your mind?

THÉRÈSE. Absolutely.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I think you 're making a mistake. I think it all the more because this chance comes just at a time — well, you 'll understand what I mean when I 've told you something that I have to say to you as manageress of *Woman Free*. It 's this. You know that in spite of all we could do we 've had to hunt about for more capital. We 've found some, but we 've had to submit to very severe conditions. The most important is that they insist upon a stringent cutting down of expenses. Instead of coming out every week, *Woman Free* will be a fortnightly in future, and we 've been obliged to consent to reducing the salaries of the contributors in proportion.

THÉRÈSE. How much will they be reduced?

MADAME NÉRISSE. In proportion I tell you. They 'll be cut down by one half.

THÉRÈSE. And I shall not have enough to live upon even in the simplest way.

MADAME NÉRISSE. That was exactly what I said to them. And the work will not be the same.

THÉRÈSE. My work will not be the same?

MADAME NÉRISSE. No; you will be obliged to work at night.

THÉRÈSE. At night?

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes.

THÉRÈSE. But then I shall be free all day.

MADAME NÉRISSE. No, you won't. In the daytime you will have to take charge of the business part of the paper, and in the evening too your work will not be purely literary, but more of an administrative character.

THÉRÈSE. It appears to me that I 'm asked to accept a smaller salary and to do double work for it.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I am conveying to you the offers of the new Directors; if they don't suit you, you have only to refuse them.

THÉRÈSE. Of course I refuse them, and you may say to the people who have made them that they must be shameful sweaters to dare to offer women salaries that leave them no choice between starvation and degradation.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Those are strong words, my dear, and you seem to forget very quickly —

THÉRÈSE [*softening*] Yes. Oh, I beg your pardon. But think for a minute, Madame, and you 'll forgive me for being angry. I hardly know what I 'm saying. [*Madame Nérisse half turns away*] Listen, oh listen! Forget what I said just now; I 'll explain to you. I accept the reduction of salary. I 'll manage. I 'll get my expenses down. Only I can't consent to give up all my time. You know I have some work in hand; you know I have a big undertaking to which I 've given all my life. I 've told you about it, you know about that. You know I can only stand my loneliness and everything because of the hope I have about this. If people take all my time, it 's the same as if they killed me. I beg you, I implore you, get them to leave me my evenings free.

MADAME NÉRISSE. It can't be done.

THÉRÈSE [*pulling herself together*] Very well, that's settled. I will go at the end of the month; that's to say to-morrow.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Take a little time to consider it.

THÉRÈSE. I have considered it. They propose that I should commit suicide. I say no!

MADAME NÉRISSE. I'm sorry, truly sorry. [*She rings. While she waits for the bell to be answered, she looks searchingly at Thérèse, who does not notice it. To the page boy who comes in*] Go and call me a taxi, but first say to Monsieur Nérisse —

BOY. Monsieur Nérisse has just gone out, Madame.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Are you quite sure?

BOY. I called him a taxi.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Very well, you can go. [*To Thérèse*] I'll ask you for your final answer this evening. [*She hands her two large books*] If you make up your mind to stay, make me those two bibliographies.

Thérèse does not answer. Madame Nérisse goes out to the left. Left alone Thérèse begins to sort the papers on her bureau rather violently. She seizes a paper knife, flings it upon the couch, and afterwards walks up and down the room in great agitation. The door on the right opens and there come in such exclamations as No! Never! It's monstrous! I shall leave! It's an insult!

Caroline Legrand, Mademoiselle Grégoire, Madame Chanteuil, and Mademoiselle de Meuriot come in. Mademoiselle de Meuriot is the only one who has kept her self-possession.

MADEMOISELLE GREGOIRE [*speaking above the din*] Good-bye, all. [*She goes to the small salon from which she originally came in, and during the conversation that follows comes in putting on her hat, and goes out unnoticed at the back*]

THÉRÈSE. Well, what do you think of this?

MADAME CHANTEUIL AND CAROLINE LEGRAND [*together*] It 's an insult.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. You must try and keep quiet. [*To Thérèse*] What shall you do?

THÉRÈSE. I shall leave.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. You ought to stay.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. No, Thérèse is right. We must all leave.

THÉRÈSE. We must leave to-morrow — no, this evening.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*quietly*] Do you think that you 'll be able to make better terms anywhere else?

THÉRÈSE. That won't be difficult.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. You think so?

THÉRÈSE. Rather.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Where, for instance?

THÉRÈSE. There are other papers in Paris besides this one.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Then you know a lot of others that pay better?

THÉRÈSE. One will be enough for me.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. And you think you 'll find a place straight off? You know there are other people —

THÉRÈSE. I 'll give lessons. I took my degree.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Much good may it do you.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. You think you 'll be a governess? At one time a governess could get 1,200 francs, now it 's 650 francs — less than the cook. And if you were to be a companion —

THÉRÈSE. Why not a lady's maid at once?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Yes; lady's maid. That 's not a bad idea. It 's the only occupation a girl brought up as rich people bring up their daughters can be certain to get and to keep, if she 's only humble enough.

THÉRÈSE. I shall manage to get along without taking to that.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. But, Thérèse, have you really been blind to all that 's been going on here? Have n't you constantly seen unfortunate women, as well brought up and as well educated as yourself, coming hunting for work? Don't you remember that advertisement of the girl that Caroline Legrand was interested in? That advertisement has been appearing in the paper for the last three months. I 'll read it to you. [*Caroline Legrand takes up a number of "Women Free" and passes it to Mademoiselle de Meuriot*] Here it is. [*Reading*] "A young lady of distinguished appearance, who has taken a high certificate for teaching. Good musician. Drawing, English, shorthand, etc." I know that girl. She told me all about her life. D' you know what she 's offered? She asked two francs an hour for teaching the piano. They laughed in her face, because for that they could get a girl who 'd taken first prize at the Conservatoire. They gave her seventy-five centimes. Deduct from that seventy-five centimes the price of the journey in that underground, the wear and tear of clothes, the time lost in going and coming, and then what d' you think is left?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Let 's be just. She got answers from doubtful places abroad, letters from old satyrs, and invitations to pose for the "movies."

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. What 's left then? The stage. It 's quite natural you should think of the stage.

THÉRÈSE. If one must.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. If one must! You 'd condescend to it, would n't you? You poor child!

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. You can't get into the Conservatoire after twenty-one. Are you under that? No. Are you a genius? No. Well then?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Have you a rich lover who will back you?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. No. Then you 'll get nothing at all in the theatres except by making friends with half a dozen men or selling yourself to one.

THÉRÈSE. I 'll go into a shop. At any rate, when it shuts I shall be free.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. You think they 're longing for you, don't you? You forget you 'd have to know things for that one does n't learn by taking a degree; things like shorthand and typewriting. Do you know there are twenty thousand women in Paris who want to get into shops and offices and can't find places?

MADAME CHANTEUIL. I know exactly what 's going to become of *me*.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Now you 're going to say something silly.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. You think so, you 've guessed. Well, I tell you, middle class girls thrown on the world as we are can't get along without a man — a husband or a lover. We have n't got the key of the prison door. We 've not learned a trade. We 've learned to smile, and dance, and sing — parlor tricks. All that 's only of use in a love affair or a marriage. Without a man we 're stranded. Our parents have brought us all up for one career and one only — the man. I was a fool not to understand before. Now I see.

CAROLINE LEGRAND. Look here, you 're not going to take a lover?

MADAME CHANTEUIL. Suppose I am?

CAROLINE LEGRAND. My dear, you came here full of indignation, clamoring against the state of society. You called yourself a feminist, but you, and women like you, are feminists only when it 's convenient. There are no real feminists except ugly women like me or old ones like Meuriot. You others come about

us in a swarm and then drop away one after another to go off to some man. As soon as a lover condescends to throw the handkerchief you're up and off to him. You *want* to be slaves. Go, my dear, and take your lover. That's your fate. Good-night. [*She goes out*]

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*to Madame Chanteuil*] Don't listen to her, you poor child. Don't ruin all your life in a fit of despair.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. I can't stay here. I'm not a saint and I'm not a fool. How can I live on what they offer to pay me?

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Stay for a little, while you're looking for something else.

MADAME CHANTEUIL. Look for something else! Never! That means all the horrors I went through, before I came here, over again! No! *no! no!* Never! Looking for work means trailing through the mud, toiling up stairs, ringing bells, being told to call again, calling again to get more snubs. And then when one thinks one's found something one comes up against a door guarded by a man who's watching you, and who's got to be satisfied before you can get into the workroom, or the office, or the shop, or whatever it may be. And then you've got to begin again with somebody else and be snubbed again. No. Since it's an accepted, settled, decided thing that the only career for a woman is to satisfy the passions of a man, I prefer the one I've chosen myself.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. And what if he goes off and leaves you with a baby?

MADAME CHANTEUIL. Well, I'll bring it up. I shan't be the first. Women do it. It happens to one in every five in Paris. Ask Mademoiselle de Meuriot, the old maid, if she wouldn't be glad to have one now? When one grows old it's better to have had a child in that way than not to have had one at all. Ask her if

I 'm not telling the truth. Ask her if she 's happy in her loneliness.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT. Oh, it 's true — it 's true! Sometimes —

She bursts into tears. Thérèse goes to her and takes her in her arms.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, Mademoiselle, dear Mademoiselle!

MADAME CHANTEUIL [*between her teeth*] Good-bye, Mademoiselle. Good-bye, Thérèse.

MADEMOISELLE DE MEURIOT [*to Madame Chanteuil*] Wait, wait. I 'm going with you. I am not going to leave you just now.

Mademoiselle de Meuriot goes out with Madame Chanteuil. Thérèse, left alone, buries her head in her hands and thinks. Then she takes the two books that Madame Nérisse has handed her, and with a determined swing sits down and starts working. After a moment Monsieur Nérisse comes in.

NÉRISSE. My dear child, I have news for you. Pleasant news, I think.

THÉRÈSE [*rather grimly*] Have you?

NÉRISSE. One little smile, please, or I shall tell you nothing.

THÉRÈSE. I assure you smiling is the last thing I feel like.

NÉRISSE. If you only knew what I 've been doing for you, you would n't receive me so unkindly.

THÉRÈSE. *You* can do nothing for me. Will you please leave me alone?

NÉRISSE. I don't deserve to be spoken to like that, Thérèse. Listen; we must come to an understanding. I know you 're angry with me still about what happened last month. I promised you then I would say no more. Have I kept my word?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, you have.

NÉRISSE. Will you always be angry? Is it quite

impossible for us to be friends? I am constantly giving you proofs of my friendship. I 've done two things for you quite lately. The first was that letter to the editor you 're going to see to-morrow, and the second is what I 've done now with our new backer. It 's this. They wanted to sack you or to offer you humiliating conditions. I said if you didn't stay I would n't stay either. I gave in on other points to get my way about this. I shall have their final answer to-morrow, and I know I shall succeed if I stick to my point.

THÉRÈSE. But what right had you to do such a thing? We agreed to forget altogether that you had dared to make love to me. D' you really not understand how that makes it impossible I should ever accept either assistance or protection from you?

NÉRISSE. I have still the right to love you in secret.

THÉRÈSE. Indeed you have not, and you 've kept your secret precious badly. Madame Nérisse suspects, and I can see quite well that she 's jealous of me. I owe her a great deal; she gave me my first start and got me my place here. I would n't make her unhappy for anything in the world. As soon as she hears of what you 've done what d' you suppose she 'll think?

NÉRISSE. I don't care a rap what she thinks.

THÉRÈSE. But I care very much. You 've compromised me seriously.

NÉRISSE [*sincerely contemptuous*] Compromised you! Aha, yes, there 's the word! Oh, you middle class girls! Always the same! What are you doing here then? What d' you know about life? Nothing. Compromised! Then all your dreams of elevating humanity, all your ambitions, your career, the realization of yourself — you 'll give up all that before you 'll be what you describe by that stupid, imbecile, middle class word, compromised. When you shook yourself free of your family you behaved like a capable woman. Now

you 're behaving and thinking like a fashionable doll. Is n't that true? I appeal to your intelligence, to your mind, to everything in you that lifts you out of the ordinary ruck. Your precious word compromised is only the twaddle of a countrified miss. Don't you see that yourself?

THÉRÈSE [*very much out of countenance*] Ah, if I were only certain that you are hiding nothing behind your friendship and your sympathy!

NÉRISSE [*with perfectly genuine indignation*] Hiding? You said hiding? Is that what you throw in my face? You insult me? What d' you take me for?

THÉRÈSE. I beg your pardon.

NÉRISSE. What kind of assurance do you want me to give you? Do you believe in nothing? Is it quite impossible for you to feel frankly and naturally, and to say "I have confidence in you, and I accept your friendship"— a friendship offered to you perfectly honestly and loyally? It really drives one to despair.

THÉRÈSE [*without enthusiasm*] Well, yes. I say it.

She puts her hands into the hands Monsieur Nérisse holds out to her.

NÉRISSE. Thank you. [*A silence. Then he says in a low voice*] Oh, Thérèse, I love you, how I love you!

THÉRÈSE [*snatching her hands away*] Oh, this is abominable. You set a trap for me, and my vanity made me fall into it.

NÉRISSE. I implore you to let me tell you about myself. I 'm so miserable and lonely when you 're away.

THÉRÈSE [*trying to speak reasonably*] I know quite well what you want to say to me, and it all amounts to this: you love me. It 's quite clear, and I answer you just as clearly: I do *not* love you.

NÉRISSE. I 'm so unhappy!

THÉRÈSE. If it 's true that you 're unhappy because I don't love you, that is a misfortune for you; a mis-

fortune for which I am not in any way responsible, because you certainly cannot accuse me of having encouraged you.

NÉRISSE. I don't ask you to love me — yet. I ask you to allow me to try and win your love.

THÉRÈSE [*almost desperate*] Don't dare to say that again. If you were an honorable man, you could n't possibly have said these things to me to-day when my living depends upon you. You know the position I 'm in, and you know that if I don't stay here, there are only two courses open to me — to go and live at the expense of my godmother, which I will *not* do, or to take the chances of a woman alone looking for work in Paris. Don't you understand that speaking about your love for me to-day is the same as driving me into the street?

NÉRISSE. If you go into the street, it is by your own choice.

THÉRÈSE. Exactly. There 's the old, everlasting, scandalous bargain. Sell yourself or you shall starve. If I give in, I can stay; if I don't —

NÉRISSE. *I* did n't say so. But clearly my efforts to help you will be greater if I know that I 'm working for my friend.

THÉRÈSE. You actually confess it! You think yourself an honorable man, and you don't see that what you 're doing is the vilest of crimes.

NÉRISSE. Now I ask you. Did I wait for your answer before I began to defend you and to help you?

THÉRÈSE. No, but you believe I shall give in through gratitude or fear. Well, don't count upon it. Even if I have to kill myself in the end, I shall never sell myself, either to you or to anyone else. [*In despair*] Then that 's what it comes to. Wherever we want to make our way, to have the right to work and to live, we find the door barred by a man who says, Give yourself or starve. Because one 's on one 's own, because

they know that there 's not another man to start up and defend his *property!* It 's almost impossible to believe human beings can be so vile to one another. For food! Just for food! Because they know we shall starve if we don't give in. Because we have old people, or children at home who are waiting for us to bring them food, men put this vile condition to us, to do like the girls in the streets. It 's shameful, shameful, shameful. It 's enough to make one shriek out loud with rage and despair.

NÉRISSE [*speaking sternly*] I 've never asked you to sell yourself. I ask you to love me.

THÉRÈSE. I shall never love you.

NÉRISSE [*as before*] You 'll never love. Neither me nor others. Listen —

THÉRÈSE [*interrupting*] I —

NÉRISSE [*preventing her from speaking*] Wait; I insist upon speaking. You will never love, you say. You will live alone all your life. You 're foolish and self-confident enough to think that you can do without a man's affection.

THÉRÈSE. But I —

NÉRISSE [*continuing*] I must try to make you understand your folly. These efforts you 're making to escape from the ordinary life of affection are useless, and it 's lucky for you they are useless. You can't live without love.

THÉRÈSE. Why?

NÉRISSE. All lonely people are wretched. But the lonely woman is twice, a hundred times more wretched than the man. You 've no idea what it is. It 's to pass all your life under suspicion, yes, suspicion. The world never believes that people live differently from others unless they have secret reasons, and the world always says that secret reasons are shameful reasons. And that 's not all. Think of the lonely room where you may cry without anyone to hear you. Think of illness

where to your bodily pain is added the mental torture of the fear of dying all alone. Think of the empty heart, the empty arms always, always. And in old age, more wretchedness in the regret for a wasted life. And for what and for whom are you making this sacrifice? For a convention; for a morality that nobody really believes in. Who 'll think the better of you for it? People won't even believe in your honesty. They will find explanations for it that would make you die of shame if you knew them. Is that what you want, Thérèse? I am unhappy. Love me. Oh, if you only —

THÉRÈSE. Please spare me your confidences.

NÉRISSE. You think this is only a caprice on my part. You are mistaken. I ask you to share my life.

THÉRÈSE. I will never be your mistress.

NÉRISSE. You 're proud and you 're strong. You insist upon marriage. Very well. I agree.

THÉRÈSE. I will not have you! I will not have you!

NÉRISSE. Why? Tell me why.

THÉRÈSE. I *will* tell you why; and then, I hope, I shall have done with you. You 're right in one way. I believe I should not be able to live all alone. I should be too unhappy. But at least I 'll keep my right of choice. If ever I give myself to anyone, it will be to someone I love. [*With vehemence*] And I love him, I love him!

NÉRISSE [*violently*] You have a lover! If that 's true —

THÉRÈSE [*with a cry of triumph*] Oh, have I got to the bottom of your vulgar, hateful little soul? If there ever was any danger of my giving in, your expression then would have saved me. You never thought there could be anything better. A lover! No, I have no lover. I have a love.

NÉRISSE. I don't see so very much difference.

THÉRÈSE [*proudly*] I know you don't, and that

shows what you are. This is the one love of my life, my love for my betrothed. I lost my money and that separated us, but we found each other again. It 's unhappy to be separated, but we bear our unhappiness out of respect for what you call prejudices, because we know how our defying them would hurt those we love. You think me ridiculous, but you cannot imagine how utterly indifferent I am. I am waiting, we are waiting, with perfect trust and love. Now d' you understand that I 'm perfectly safe from you? Go!

NÉRISSE [*in a low voice which trembles with anger and jealousy*] How dare you say that to me, Thérèse? How dare you bring such a picture before me? I will not allow you to belong to another man. [*He advances towards her*]

THÉRÈSE [*in violent excitement*] No, no, don't dare! Don't touch me! don't dare to touch me!

She cries out those words with such violence and in a voice of such authority that Nérisse stops and drops into a chair.

NÉRISSE. Forgive me. I 'm out of my mind. I don't know what I 'm doing.

THÉRÈSE [*in a low, forced voice*] *Will* you go? I 've work to do.

NÉRISSE. Yes, I 'll go. [*He rises and says humbly*] I want to ask you — you won't leave us?

THÉRÈSE. You dare to say that? You think I 'll expose myself a second time to a scene like this. Yes! I shall leave, and leave to-night! *Will* you go?

NÉRISSE. I implore you. [*Hearing a noise outside, suddenly alarmed*] Here she is! Control yourself, I beg of you. Don't tell her.

THÉRÈSE. You need n't be afraid.

Madame Nérisse comes in.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*looking from one to the other*] What 's going on here?

NÉRISSE. Mademoiselle Thérèse says that she 's going to leave us, and I tried to make her understand — perhaps you could do something — I must go out.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Yes. Go.

He takes his hat and goes out at the back.

MADAME NÉRISSE. You wish to leave us?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, Madame.

MADAME NÉRISSE. Because Monsieur Nérisse —?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, Madame.

MADAME NÉRISSE [*troubled and sad*] What can I say to you?

THÉRÈSE. Nothing, Madame.

MADAME NÉRISSE. My poor child.

THÉRÈSE. I don't want pity. Don't be unhappy about me. I shall be able to manage for myself. I have plenty of courage.

MADAME NÉRISSE. I 'm so ashamed to let you go like this. How honest and loyal you are! [*To herself*] I was honest too, once.

THÉRÈSE. Good-bye, Madame. [*She begins to tidy her papers*]

MADAME NÉRISSE. Good-bye, Thérèse.

Madame Nérisse goes out.

When Thérèse is left alone she breaks down and bursts out crying like a little child. Then she wipes her eyes, puts her hat on, goes to the cardboard box, and takes out her veil, which she slips into her little bag. She takes out Monsieur Nérisse's letter; still crying she puts the letter into another envelope, which she closes and leaves well in sight upon the table. Then she takes her little black moleskin bag and her umbrella and goes out slowly. She is worn out, almost stooping; and, as the curtain falls, one sees the poor little figure departing, its shoulders shaken by sobs.

ACT III

SCENE: — *Thérèse's studio at the bookbinding workshops of Messrs. Féliat and Guéret at Evreux. Strewn about are materials for binding books: patterns, tools, and silks. A glazed door on the right opens into the general women's workshops, and there is a door leading into a small office on the left. In the middle, towards the back, is a large drawing table; several easels stand about. There are some chairs and a small bureau. Cards hang upon the walls, on which are printed the text of the Factory Laws. There is a door at the back. It is October.*

Monsieur Guéret and Monsieur Féliat come in excitedly.

GUÉRET. I tell you Duriot's men are coming out on strike.

FÉLIAT. And I ask you, what 's that to me?

GUÉRET. Ours will do the same.

FÉLIAT. Oh no, they won't.

GUÉRET. You 'll see.

FÉLIAT. Duriot's men are furious with the women because of what happened last year.

GUÉRET. They say woman 's the enemy in business.

FÉLIAT. Let 'em talk.

GUÉRET. They want Duriot to sack all his women.

FÉLIAT. And I 've told you why. There 's no danger of anything like that happening here.

GUÉRET. You think so, do you? Well, you 'll see.

FÉLIAT. We shall see.

GUÉRET. You 'll give in only after they 've broken two or three of your machines as they did Duriot's, or done something worse, perhaps.

FÉLIAT. My dear Guéret, I get out of the women for a cent what I have to pay the men three cents for. And as long as I can economize ten cents on the piece I shall go on.

GUÉRET. You 'll regret it. If I was in your place — [*He stops*]

FÉLIAT. Well, what would you do if you were in my place?

GUÉRET. What should I do?

FÉLIAT. Yes, what?

GUÉRET. I should n't take long to think. I 'd cut off a finger to save my hand. I 'd turn out every one of the women to-morrow.

FÉLIAT. You 're mad. You 've always objected to my employing women, and I know very well why.

GUÉRET. Well, let 's hear why.

FÉLIAT. You want to know. Well, because you 've been jealous of Thérèse ever since she came here six months ago.

GUÉRET. Oh, I say!

FÉLIAT. That 's it; my sister can't endure her.

GUÉRET. Marguerite —

FÉLIAT. You know she would n't even see her when she same down from Paris; and if Thérèse got work here, it was in spite of Marguerite. I was wiser than you about this. The girl's courage appealed to me. She 's plucky and intelligent. Oh, I don't want to make myself out cleverer than I am. I took her a bit out of pity, and I thought she 'd draw me a few designs; that was all I expected. But she has energy and initiative. She organized the two workrooms, and now she 's got the whole thing into order by starting this Union.

GUÉRET. The Hen's Union.

FÉLIAT. What?

GUÉRET. That 's what the men call her Union. You should hear the things they say about it.

FÉLIAT. Well, long live the Hen's Union! A hen 's plucky when it has to be.

GUÉRET. Seriously, it 's just this Union which has annoyed the men. They feel it 's dangerous.

FÉLIAT. Very well. I 'll be ready for them.

Thérèse comes in.

GUÉRET. I 'll go and find out what 's going on.

FÉLIAT. Yes, do.

Monsieur Guéret goes out.

THÉRÈSE. I 've just been seeing the man who makes our finishing tools. He says it 's perfectly easy to make a tool from the drawing I did that won't be more expensive than the old one. [*Looking for a paper and finding it on the table*] Here 's the drawing. You see I 've thought of cheapness, but I 've not sacrificed utility. After all, it 's only a copy of a Grolier, just a little altered.

FÉLIAT. Very good, but what will the price come out at?

THÉRÈSE. How much do you think.

FÉLIAT. I can easily do it. [*He calculates during what follows*]

THÉRÈSE. The beating won't be done with a hammer, but in the rolling machine; the sawing-in and the covering will be done as usual.

FÉLIAT [*having finished his sum*] Two francs forty.

THÉRÈSE [*triumphantly*] One franc seventy. You 've calculated on the basis of men's work. But, if you approve, I 'll open a new workroom for women in the old shop. Lucienne can manage it. I could let Madame Princeteau take Lucienne's present place, and I 'll turn out the stuff at the price I quoted.

FÉLIAT. But that 's first-rate. I give you an absolutely free hand.

THÉRÈSE. Thank you, Monsieur Féliat.

FÉLIAT. How do you think the men will take it? You know that last year, before you came here, a strike of the workmen was broken by the women taking the work the men were asking a rise for — taking it at lower wages, too. Since then the men feel very strongly against the women. Your godfather is anxious about it.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, leave it to me, I 'm not afraid.

FÉLIAT. Well done. I like pluck. Go ahead. How lucky I was to get you here.

THÉRÈSE. How grateful I am to you for believing in me. [*Lucienne appears at the door on the right. She is speaking to a workwoman who is not visible, while the following conversation goes on*] And how good you are, too, to have given work to poor Lucienne. When I think what you saved her from! She really owes her life to you. At any rate she owes it to you that she 's living respectably.

FÉLIAT. Well, I owe *you* ten per cent reduction on my general expenses. [*With a change of tone*] Then that 's agreed? You 're going ahead?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, Monsieur.

FÉLIAT. I 'll go and give the necessary orders. [*He goes out*]

THÉRÈSE. It 's all right. It 's done. He 's agreed! I 'm to have my new workroom, and you 're to be the head of it.

LUCIENNE. Oh, splendid! Then I 'm really of some importance here at last. [*A long happy sigh*] Oh dear, how happy I am. I 'd never have believed I could have enjoyed the smell of a bindery so. [*Sniffing*] Glue, and white of egg, and old leather; it 's lovely! Oh, Thérèse, what you did for me in bringing me here! What I owe you! That 's what a woman's

being free means; it means a woman who earns her own living.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, you're right! Isn't it splendid, Lucienne, ten wretched women saved, thanks to our new workshop. I've seen Duriot's forewoman. At any moment fifty women from there may be out of work. I can take on only ten at present, and I've had to choose. That was dreadful! Thirty of them are near starvation. I took the worst cases: the old maids, the girls with babies, the ones whose husbands have gone off and left them, the widows. Every one of those, but for me, would have been starved or gone on the streets. I used to want to write books and realize my dreams that way. Now I can realize them by work. I wish Caroline Legrand could know what I'm doing. It was she who helped me to get over my silly pride, and come and ask for work here.

LUCIENNE. Dear Caroline Legrand! Without her! Without you! [*With a change of tone*] What d'you suppose happened to me this morning? I had a visit from Monsieur Gambard.

THÉRÈSE [*laughing*] Another visit! I shall be jealous!

LUCIENNE. You've reason. For the last week that excellent old man has come every single morning with a book for me to bind. I begged him not to take so much trouble, and I told him that if he had more work for us to do, we could send for the books to his house. What d'you think he did to-day?

THÉRÈSE. I've no idea.

LUCIENNE. He asked me to marry him.

THÉRÈSE. My dear! What then?

LUCIENNE. Why, then I told him that I was married and separated from my husband.

THÉRÈSE. There's such a thing as divorce.

LUCIENNE. Naughty girl! That's exactly what he

said. I told him that my first experience of marriage was not calculated to make me run the chances of a second. And then he asked me to be his mistress.

THÉRÈSE. Indignation of Lucienne!

LUCIENNE. No! I really could n't be angry. He offered so naïvely to settle part of his fortune upon me that I was disarmed. I simply told him I was able to earn my own living, so I was not obliged to sell myself.

THÉRÈSE. And he went off?

LUCIENNE. And he went off.

THÉRÈSE [*starting suddenly*] Was that three o'clock that struck.

LUCIENNE. Yes, but there 's nothing very extraordinary in that.

THÉRÈSE. Not for you, perhaps. But I made up my mind not to think about a certain thing until it was three o'clock. I stuck to it — almost — not very easily. Well, my dear, three o'clock to-day is a most solemn hour in my life.

LUCIENNE. You don't say so!

THÉRÈSE. *I do.* Lucienne, I am so happy. I don't know how I can have deserved to be as happy as I am.

LUCIENNE. Good gracious, what 's happened in the last five minutes?

THÉRÈSE. I 'll tell you. One hour ago René arrived at Evreux. He 's come back from Tunis. Come back a success and a somebody. And now —

Vincent, a workman, comes in.

VINCENT. Good-morning, Mademoiselle Thérèse. I want a word with you, because it 's you who engages —

THÉRÈSE. Not the workmen.

VINCENT. I know. But it 's about a woman, about my wife.

THÉRÈSE [*sharply*] Your wife? But I don't want your wife.

VINCENT. I heard as how you were taking on hands.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, but I choose them carefully. First of all I take the ones who need work or are not wanted at home.

VINCENT. You 're quite right — but I ain't asking you to pay my old woman very much — not as much as a man.

THÉRÈSE. Why not, if she does the same work?

VINCENT [*with male superiority*] Well, in the first place, she's only a woman; and, besides, if you did n't make a bit out of it, you would n't take her in the place of a man.

THÉRÈSE. But you get excellent wages here yourself. You can live without forcing your wife to work.

VINCENT. Well, anyhow, her few halfpence would be enough to pay for my tobacco.

LUCIENNE [*laughing*] Come, you don't smoke as much as all that.

VINCENT. Besides, it 'll put a bit more butter on the bread.

THÉRÈSE. But your wife will take the place of another woman who has n't even dry bread perhaps.

VINCENT. Oh, if one was bothering all the time about other people's troubles, you 'd have enough to do!

THÉRÈSE. Now will you forgive me if I meddle a little in what is n't exactly my business?

VINCENT. Oh, go on, you won't upset me.

THÉRÈSE. What d' you do when you leave the works? You go to the saloon?

VINCENT [*losing control of himself and becoming violent and coarse*] That 's yer game, is it! You take me for a regler soaker. That 's a bit too thick, that is. You can go and ask for yourself in all the saloons round here. Blimey, sometimes I don't drink nothing but water for a week on end! Can you find anybody as has ever seen me blue-blind-paralytic — eh? I 'm one of the steady ones, I am. I has a tiddley in the morn-

ing, like every man as is a man, to keep out the fog; then I has a Vermouth before lunch, and a drop of something short after, just to oil the works like — and that 's the bloomin' lot. Of course you 're bound to have a Pernod before dinner to get your appetite up; and if I go for a smoke and a wet after supper, well, it 's for the sake of a bit of company.

THÉRÈSE [*who has been jotting down figures with a pencil while he has been talking*] Well, that 's a franc a day you might have saved.

VINCENT. A franc.

THÉRÈSE [*holding out the paper to him*] Add it up.

VINCENT [*a little confused*] Oh, I 'll take your word for it. I ain't much good at sums.

THÉRÈSE. With that franc you might have put a fine lot of butter on every round of bread.

VINCENT. Well, look here, I want a bicycle.

THÉRÈSE. Why? You live five minutes' walk from here.

VINCENT. Yes, but I want to get about a bit on Sundays.

THÉRÈSE. There 's one thing you have n't thought of. You have two little children. Who 'll look after them if your wife comes to work here?

VINCENT. Don't you worry about that. You takes 'em all dirty to the crèche every morning and gets 'em back in the evenin' all tidied up.

THÉRÈSE. And who 's going to get supper ready?

VINCENT [*naïvely*] Why, the old woman when she comes back from work.

THÉRÈSE. While you take your little drink?

VINCENT [*in the same tone*] Oh, yes; I shan't hurry her up too much.

THÉRÈSE. Who 'll mend your clothes?

VINCENT. Why, the old woman of course.

THÉRÈSE. When?

VINCENT. On Sundays.

THÉRÈSE. While you go off for a run on the bicycle?

VINCENT. Yes; it 'll be a change for her. And at night I 'll take her to see me play billiards. [*With a change of tone*] That 's all settled, ain't it?

THÉRÈSE. Indeed, it 's not.

VINCENT. Why not? Are n't you going to open a new workroom?

THÉRÈSE. Your wife has no need to work.

VINCENT. What 's that got to do with you? You 're taking on the others.

THÉRÈSE. The others are in want.

VINCENT. That 's nothing to me. You ought to take the wives of the chaps as works here first.

THÉRÈSE. All I can do is to mention her name at the next meeting of our Union.

VINCENT. Oh, damn your Union — it 's a fair nuisance!

THÉRÈSE. A Union is always a nuisance to somebody.

VINCENT. And you 'll ask your Union not to take my old woman?

THÉRÈSE. I certainly shall.

VINCENT [*rather threateningly*] Very well. Things was more comfortable here before you come from Paris, you know.

THÉRÈSE [*quietly*] I 'm sorry.

VINCENT. And they 'll be more comfortable when you take your hook back.

THÉRÈSE. That won't be for a good while yet.

VINCENT. I ain't so damned sure about that! Good-afternoon.

THÉRÈSE. Good-afternoon.

He goes out.

LUCIENNE. You 've made an enemy, my dear.

THÉRÈSE. I don't care as long as I 'm able to

prevent women being driven to work to pay for their husbands' idleness and drunkenness.

Féliat and Guéret come in. Lucienne goes out.

FÉLIAT. Tell me, Mademoiselle, if there was a strike here, could you count upon your workwomen?

THÉRÈSE. I 'm sure I could.

FÉLIAT. Are you certain none of them would go back on you?

THÉRÈSE. Two or three married women might if their husbands threatened them.

FÉLIAT. Will you try, in a quiet way, to find out about that?

THÉRÈSE. Yes, certainly. [*She makes a movement to go out*]

FÉLIAT. Look here, it seems that Duriot has just had a visit from two delegates from the Central Committee in Paris, who were sent down to protest against the engagement of women. I 'm afraid we 're going to have trouble here.

THÉRÈSE. The conditions here are very different from those at Duriot's.

FÉLIAT. All the same, find out what you can.

THÉRÈSE. I will, at once. [*She goes towards the door*]

FÉLIAT. Whatever happens we must send off that Brazilian order. How is it getting on?

THÉRÈSE. We shall have everything ready in three days. I 'll go and inquire about the other thing. [*She goes out*]

FÉLIAT. Good.

GUÉRET. Three days is n't the end of the world. I think I can promise you to keep my men as long as that.

FÉLIAT. If it 's absolutely necessary, one might make them some little concessions.

GUÉRET. I 'll do all I can.

FÉLIAT. Yes. And if they 're too exacting, we 'll let them go, and the women shall get the stuff finished up for us. [*There is a knock at the door*] Come in.

René comes in.

GUÉRET. Hullo!

FÉLIAT. René!

GUÉRET. You or your ghost?

FÉLIAT. Where do you come from? Nobody 's heard of you for a hundred years.

RENÉ. Come now, only six months, and you 've had some news.

FÉLIAT. Where are you from last?

RENÉ. From Tunis.

GUÉRET. And what are you doing here?

RENÉ. I 'll tell you all about it. I want to have a bit of a talk with you.

FÉLIAT. Well, we 're listening.

GUÉRET. You 're mighty solemn about it.

RENÉ. It 's extremely serious business.

FÉLIAT. Don't be tragic. You 're here safe and sound; and you 've not lost money, because you 'd none to lose.

RENÉ. I 've come to marry Thérèse.

GUÉRET. Well, I must say you don't beat about the bush.

FÉLIAT. But it 's to your own people you 've got to say that. What the devil — ! Thérèse has no more money than she had a year ago. So —

RENÉ. I 'll marry her in spite of them.

GUÉRET. Well, we 've nothing to do with it.

RENÉ. Yes, but I don't want to marry her in spite of you.

FÉLIAT. Nor in spite of herself.

RENÉ. I 'm certain she won't say no.

FÉLIAT. But a year ago you solemnly separated; you both agreed everything was over.

RENÉ. Nothing was over. A year ago I was a fool.

GUÉRET. To the point again.

FÉLIAT. And what are you now?

RENÉ. At any rate I am not quite useless any longer. I 'm not a boy now, obliged to do what he 's told because he 's perfectly incapable of doing for himself.

FÉLIAT. Have you found something to do?

RENÉ. I 'm in phosphates.

FÉLIAT. And what the devil are you in phosphates?

RENÉ. Representative.

FÉLIAT. How do you mean?

RENÉ. A commercial traveller, as father said with great contempt.

GÉRET. Well, it was not with a view to that sort of future that he had you called to the Bar.

RENÉ. At the Bar I could have earned my own living in about ten years — possibly. When I had to give up marrying Thérèse I saw how useless I was. Thanks to her I found myself out. She gave me a bit of her own courage. She woke up my self-respect. Besides, after that I had something to work for, an aim, and I seemed to understand why I was alive. I worked and read a lot; my firm noticed me; they sent me to Tunis. I asked them to let me give up clerk work and have a try on my own. Over there I got into touch with three small firms. I placed their goods. I earn four hundred francs a month. Next year I mean to start a little branch in this district where we will manufacture superphosphates. From now until then I shall travel about the district and try and get customers; and my wife — and Thérèse — will go on with her work here, if you will be so good as to keep her.

GUÉRET. Ouf! Think of a young man who can talk as long as that, without taking breath, giving up the Bar. What a pity!

FÉLIAT [*to René*] Have you told all that to your people?

RENÉ. Yes. They 're not at all proud of my business. And after refusing to let me marry Thérèse because she had no money they won't let me marry her now because she works for her living. To be directress of a bindery, even of your bindery, uncle, is not distinguished enough for them.

FÉLIAT. Well, my boy, you certainly could n't have stood up to things like that a year ago. What d' you want us to do for you? Thérèse does n't want our consent to marry; nor do you.

While Monsieur Féliat has been speaking, old Mother Bougne has come in from the right. She is a poor old workwoman who walks with difficulty, leaning on a broom, from which one feels that she never parts. She has a bunch of keys at her waistbelt; her apron is turned up and makes a sort of pocket into which she slips pieces of paper and scraps that she picks up from the floor. René looks at her with surprise.

FÉLIAT. You 're looking at Mother Bougne. Good-morning, Mother Bougne.

MOTHER BOUGNE. Good-morning, Monsieur Féliat.

FÉLIAT. When does the Committee of your Union sit?

MOTHER BOUGNE. On Wednesday, Monsieur Féliat.

FÉLIAT. You won't miss it, will you?

MOTHER BOUGNE. I have n't missed one up to now, Monsieur Féliat.

FÉLIAT. That 's right. [*She goes out at the back during what follows. Monsieur Féliat turns to René and says*] We call Mother Bougne our Minister of the Interior, because she tries to keep the place tidy. She 's been a weaver near Rouen since she was eight years old; she 's been stranded here.

RENÉ. And she 's a member of the Committee of the Union?

GUÉRET. Yes, she 's a member. Thérèse insisted on it. When Thérèse founded a Woman's Trade Union here she had the nice idea of including among them this poor old creature, wrecked by misery and hard work. Our Thérèse has ideas like that. [*With a change of tone*] But business, business. What do you want us to do for you?

RENÉ. I 've come to ask you two things. The first is to try to get round my people.

FÉLIAT. Well, I 'll try. But I know your father. He 's even more obstinate than I am myself. I shan't make the smallest impression upon him. What else?

RENÉ. I want to have a talk with Thérèse in your presence.

FÉLIAT. In our presence! Now listen, my boy. Our presence will be much more useful in the work rooms. We have our hands full here. You 've dropped in just at the point of a split between workmen and employers. Besides, to tell you the truth, I think I know pretty well what you have to say to Thérèse. I 'll send her to you. And, look here, don't keep her too long, because she 's got her hands full too. [*To Guéret*] Will you go and telephone to Duriot's?

GUÉRET [*looking at his watch*] Yes, there might be some news. [*He goes out*]

FÉLIAT [*to René*] And I 'll send Thérèse here.

He goes out and René is alone for a few moments. Then Thérèse comes in. They advance towards each other quietly.

THÉRÈSE. How do you do, René?

RENÉ. How are you, Thérèse?

They shake hands, then, giving way to their feelings, they kiss each other tenderly and passionately.

THÉRÈSE [*in a low voice*] That 'll do; don't, René dear. [*She withdraws gently from his embrace*] Don't. Let 's talk. Have you seen your people?

RENÉ. Yes.

THÉRÈSE. Well?

RENÉ. Well, Thérèse, they won't come to our wedding.

THÉRÈSE. They still refuse their consent?

RENÉ. We can do without it.

THÉRÈSE. But they refuse it?

RENÉ. Yes. Forgive me, my dearest, for asking you to take just my own self. Do you love me enough to marry me quite simply, without any relations, since I leave my relations for your sake?

THÉRÈSE. My dear, we must n't do that; we must wait.

RENÉ. No, I won't wait. I won't lose the best time of my life, and years of happiness, for the sake of prejudices I don't believe in. Do you remember what you said to me the night we played *Barberine*? You were splendid. You said: "Marry me all the same, in spite of my poverty." [*She makes a movement to stop him*] Oh, let me — please let me go on! I was only a miserable weakling then, I was frightened about the future. But you roused me and set me going. If I 'm a man now, it 's to you I owe it. Thanks to you I know how splendid it is to trust one's self and struggle, and hope, and succeed. Now I can come to you and say: "I am the man you wanted me to be, let us marry and live together." Oh, together, together! How splendid it sounds! Do you remember how you said that night long ago: "Let us conquer our place in the world together"?

THÉRÈSE. Oh, René! René! We must wait!

RENÉ. Why? *Why* must we wait? What possible reason can you have for not doing now what you wanted me to do a year ago? Don't you believe in me?

THÉRÈSE. Oh yes, yes. It 's not that!

RENÉ. What is it then? Thérése, you frighten me. It seems as if you were hiding something from me.

THÉRÈSE. No, no. What an idea!

RENÉ. Is it — oh, can it be that you don't love me so much?

THÉRÈSE. Oh, René, no, no. Don't think that for a moment.

RENÉ. But you're not being straight with me. You're hiding something.

THÉRÈSE. Don't ask me.

RENÉ. Thérèse!

THÉRÈSE. Oh, please don't ask me!

RENÉ. Now, you know very well that's impossible. How can there be secrets between us? You and I are the sort of people who are straight with one another. I must have my share in everything that makes you unhappy.

THÉRÈSE. Well, then, I must tell you. It's about your father and mother. Oh, how I wish I need n't tell you. René, while you've been away your people have been dreadful to me. Your father came here to see me. He wanted me to swear never to see you again — never. Of course I would n't. When I refused to give in he said it was through worldly wisdom. He said: "If he was n't going to inherit my money, you would n't hang on to him like this." He dared to say that to me, René — your father whom I have always wanted to respect and love. He thought that of me. And then I swore to him, and I've sworn to myself, that I'll never marry you, never, without his consent. I cannot be suspected of *that*. You understand, don't you? The poorer I am the prouder I ought to be. [*She bursts into tears*] My dear — my dear! How unhappy I am! How dreadfully unhappy I am!

RENÉ. My darling! [*He kisses her*]

THÉRÈSE. Don't, René! I could n't help telling

you. But you understand, my dearest, that we 've got to wait until he knows me better.

RENÉ [*forcibly*] No. We will *not* wait.

THÉRÈSE. I 'll never break my word.

RENÉ. What d' you want us to wait for? A change of opinion that 'll probably never come. And our youth will go, we shall have spoilt our lives. You want to send me back to Paris all alone and unhappy, to spend long silent evenings thinking about you and suffering from not being with you, while you, here, will be suffering in the same way, in the same loneliness. And we love each other, and it absolutely depends only on ourselves whether we shall change our double unhappiness for a double joy. [*Changing his tone*] I can't stand it, Thérèse. I 've loved you for two years, and all this last year I 've toiled and slaved to win you. [*Low and ardently*] I want you.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, hush, hush!

RENÉ. I want you. You 're the one woman I 've loved in my life. My love for you *is* my life. I can't give up my life. Listen: I have to be in Paris this evening; are you going to let me leave you broken-hearted?

THÉRÈSE. Do you think that I 'm not broken-hearted?

RENÉ. I shan't suffer any the less because I know that you 're suffering too.

THÉRÈSE. It does n't depend upon us.

RENÉ. It depends entirely upon us. Look here, if people refuse to let us marry, our love for each other is strong enough to do without marriage. Thérèse, come with me!

THÉRÈSE. Oh, René, René! What are you asking me to do?

RENÉ. Have you faith in me? Look at me. Do you think I 'm sincere? Do you think I 'm an honest

man? Do you think that, if people refuse to let us go through a ridiculous ceremony together, our union will be any the less durable? Is it the ceremony that makes it real? Thérèse, come with me. Come this evening; let 's go together; let 's love each other. Oh, if you loved me as much as I love you, you would n't hesitate for a second.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, don't say that, I implore you!

RENÉ. Then you don't trust me?

THÉRÈSE. I won't do it. I won't do it.

RENÉ. What prevents you? You 're absolutely alone, you have no relations. You owe nothing to anybody. No one will suffer for your action. You 've already given a year of your life to the foolish prejudices of society. You 've shown them respect enough. First they prevented our marriage because you were poor; now they want to prevent it because you work. Thanks to you I have been able to assert myself and get free. My father and mother can keep their money. I don't want it. Come.

THÉRÈSE [*in tears*] You 're torturing me. Oh, my dear, you 're making me most unhappy. I could never do that, never. Don't be angry with me. I love you. I swear that I love you.

RENÉ. I love you, Thérèse, I swear that I love you. All my life is yours. [*He breaks down*] Don't make me so unhappy. The more unhappy, the more I love you.

THÉRÈSE. I could n't do it.

Monsieur Féliat comes in.

FÉLIAT. Hullo! Was it to make her cry like that that you wanted to see her? Is that what you 've learnt "in phosphates"? [*To Thérèse*] Don't, my dear. [*In a tone of kindly remonstrance*] You! Is it you I find crying like a little schoolgirl? [*Thérèse wipes her eyes*] Oh, I understand all about it. But

his father will give in in the end. And you, René, be reasonable, don't hurry things.

RENÉ. But I want —

FÉLIAT [*interrupting him*] No, no, for goodness' sake, not just now. We 'll talk about it later on. Just now we have other fish to fry. We 're in a fix, my young lover. We 've got to face some very serious difficulties. Go along with you.

Monsieur Guéret comes in.

GUÉRET [*to Monsieur Féliat*] One of the delegates of the Central Committee is outside.

FÉLIAT. And what does the brute want?

GUÉRET [*makes a gesture of caution and points to the door*] He wishes to speak to the Chairman of the Women's Union.

FÉLIAT. Oh, ask the gentleman in. [*To René*] My boy, you must be off. I 'll see you presently.

RENÉ. Yes, presently.

THÉRÈSE [*aside to René*] Be at the station half an hour before the train goes. I 'll be there to say good-bye.

Renè goes out. Monsieur Guéret brings in the delegate and goes out again himself.

FÉLIAT. Good-morning. What can I do for you?

DELEGATE. I am a delegate from the Central Committee in Paris.

FÉLIAT. I am Monsieur Féliat, the owner of these works. I 'm at your service.

DELEGATE. It 's not to you I wish to speak. This is a question which does n't concern you.

FÉLIAT. Which does n't concern *me!*

DELEGATE. Not at present, at any rate. Will you kindly tell me where I can find the person I have come to see?

FÉLIAT [*furious*] I — [*controlling himself*] She is here. [*He indicates Thérèse*]

Monsieur Féliat goes out to the right.

DELEGATE. Mademoiselle, I 'm here as the representative of the Central Committee in Paris to request you to break up your Women's Union.

THÉRÈSE. So that 's it.

DELEGATE. That 's it.

THÉRÈSE. What harm does it do you?

DELEGATE. It strengthens you too much against us.

THÉRÈSE. If I asked you to break up yours for the same reason, what would you say to me?

DELEGATE. Our union is to fight the masters; yours is to fight us.

THÉRÈSE. It does you no harm whatever.

DELEGATE. Your union supports a movement we 've decided to fight.

THÉRÈSE. What movement?

DELEGATE. The movement of the competition of women, the invasion of the labor market by female labor.

THÉRÈSE. Not a very dangerous invasion.

DELEGATE. You think not. Listen. I 've just come down from Paris. Who gave me my railway ticket? A woman. Who did I find behind the counter at the Post Office? A woman. Who was at the end of the telephone wire? A woman. I had to get some money; it was a woman who gave it to me at the bank. I don't even speak of the women doctors and lawyers. And in industry, like everywhere else, women want to supplant us. There are women now even in the metal-working shops. Everyone has the right to defend himself against competition. The workmen are going to defend themselves.

THÉRÈSE. Without troubling about the consequences. To take away a woman's right to work is to condemn her to starvation or prostitution. You 're not competitors, you 're enemies.

DELEGATE. You 're mistaken. We 're so little the

enemies of the women that in asking you to do away with your Union we 're speaking in your own interest.

THÉRÈSE. Bah!

DELEGATE. We don't want women to take lower wages than ours.

THÉRÈSE. I know the phrase. "Equal wages for equal work."

DELEGATE. That 's absolutely just.

THÉRÈSE. The masters won't give those equal wages.

DELEGATE. The women have a means of forcing them to; they can strike.

THÉRÈSE. We don't wish to employ those means.

DELEGATE. I beg your pardon, the women would consent at once. It 's you that prevent them, through the Union that you 've started. Is n't that so?

THÉRÈSE. That is so. But you know why.

DELEGATE. No, I do not know why.

THÉRÈSE. Then I will tell you why. It is because the phrase only seems to be just and generous. You know very well that here, at any rate, the owner would not employ any more women if he had to pay them the same wages he pays the men. And if they struck, he 'd replace them by men. Your apparent solicitude is only hypocrisy. In reality you want to get rid of the women.

DELEGATE. Well, I admit that. The women are not competitors; they 're enemies. In every dispute they 'll take the side of the masters.

THÉRÈSE. How d' you know that?

DELEGATE. They 've always done it, because women take orders by instinct. They 're humble, and docile, and easily frightened.

THÉRÈSE. Why don't you say inferiors, at once?

DELEGATE. Well, yes; inferiors, the majority of them.

THÉRÈSE. If they 're inferiors, it 's only right that they should take lower wages.

DELEGATE. Oh, I did n't mean to say —

THÉRÈSE [*interrupting him*] But it 's not true — they are *not* your inferiors. If they believe they are, it 's because of the wrongs and humiliations you 've imposed on them for centuries. You men stick together. Why are we not to do the same? If you start trade unions, why may not we? As a matter of fact, as regards work, we 're your equals. We need our wages; and to get hold of the jobs that we 're able to do we offer our work at a cheaper rate than you do. That is competition; you must protect yourselves from it. If you want no more competition, keep your women at home and support them.

DELEGATE. But that 's precisely what we want: "The man in the workshop, the woman in the home."

THÉRÈSE. If the mother is not at home nowadays, it 's because the man is in the saloon.

DELEGATE. The men go to the saloons because they 're tired of finding the place badly kept and the supper not ready when they go home, and instead of a wife a tired-out factory hand.

THÉRÈSE. D' you think it 's to amuse themselves the women go to work? Don't you suppose they prefer a quiet life in their own homes?

DELEGATE. They 've only got to stay there.

THÉRÈSE. And who 's to support them?

DELEGATE. Their husbands!

THÉRÈSE. First they 've got to have husbands. What about the ones who have no husbands — the girls, the widows, the abandoned? Is n't it better to give them a trade than to force them to take a lover? Some of them want to leave off being obliged to beg for the help of a man. Can't you see that for a lot of women work means freedom? Can you blame them for de-

manding the right to work? That 's the victory they 're fighting for.

DELEGATE. I 'm not at all sure that that victory is a desirable one. Indeed, I 'm sure it is not. When you 've succeeded in giving the woman complete independence through hard work; when you have taken her children from her and handed them over to a crèche; when you 've severed her from her domestic duties and also from all domestic happiness and joy, how d' you know she won't turn round and demand to have her old slavery back again? The quietness and peace of her own home? The right to care for her own husband and nurse her own child?

THÉRÈSE. But can't you see that it 's just that that the immense majority of women are demanding now? We want the women to stay at home just as much as you do. But how are you going to make that possible? At present the money spent on drink equals the total of the salaries paid to women. So the problem is to get rid of drunkenness. But the middle classes refuse to meet this evil straightforwardly because the votes which keep them in power are in the pockets of the publicans; and you socialist leaders refuse just as much as the middle classes really to tackle the drink question because you 're as keen for votes as they are. You 've got to look the situation in the face. We 're on the threshold of a new era. In every civilized country, in the towns and in the rural districts, from the destitute and from the poor, from every home that a man has deserted for drink or left empty because men have no longer the courage to marry, a woman will appear, who comes out from that home and will sit down by your side in the workshop, in the factory, at the office, in the counting house. You don't want her as housewife; and as she refuses to be a prostitute, she will become a woman-worker, a competitor; and finally, because she

has more energy than you have, and because *she* is not a drunkard, she will take your places.

DELEGATE [*brutally*] Well, before another hour's gone over our heads you 'll find that she won't start that game here.

Monsieur Féliat comes in.

FÉLIAT [*to the delegate*] My dear sir, a thousand pardons for interrupting you, but as I 've just turned your friend out of my house because he took advantage of being in it to start a propaganda against me, what 's the use of your going on talking to this lady about a course of action she will no more consent to than I shall?

DELEGATE. Very well, Monsieur. I shall telephone to Paris for instructions. Probably you will refuse to let me use your instrument.

FÉLIAT. I most certainly shall.

DELEGATE. So I shall go to the Post Office, and in ten minutes —

FÉLIAT. Go, my dear sir, go. But let me tell you in a friendly way that it 'll take you more than ten minutes to get on to Paris.

DELEGATE. It takes you more, perhaps, but not me. Good-morning. [*The delegate goes out*]

FÉLIAT [*to Thérèse*] The low brute! Things are not going well. What happened at Duriot's has made a very unfortunate impression here. The news that you were going to open a new workshop for the women has been twisted and distorted by gossip and chatter, and my men have been worked up by the other brute to come and threaten me.

THÉRÈSE. What d' you mean?

FÉLIAT. They threaten me with a strike and with blacklisting me if I don't give up the idea.

THÉRÈSE. You can't give up absolutely certain profits.

FÉLIAT. If I am too obstinate, it may result in much larger losses which will be equally certain.

THÉRÈSE. But what then?

FÉLIAT. I 've had to promise that for the present at any rate there 's no question of taking on any more women.

THÉRÈSE. Oh!

FÉLIAT. What could I do?

Monsieur Guéret comes in.

FÉLIAT [*to Guéret*] Well?

GUÉRET. They would n't listen.

FÉLIAT. I was afraid they would n't. [*To Thérèse*] That 's not all. Your godfather has been trying something else, and I understand he 's not succeeded. I shall have to take the mending away from your workshop.

THÉRÈSE. The women won't agree to that.

GUÉRET. Perhaps that would be the best solution of the difficulty.

THÉRÈSE [*startled*] Don't say that. You can't mean it. Think!

GUÉRET. What 's more, the men refuse to finish the work the women have begun.

THÉRÈSE. We 'll finish it.

GUÉRET. Then they 'll strike.

THÉRÈSE. Let them strike. Monsieur Féliat, you can fight now and get terms for yourself. Just at this moment we have only one very urgent order. If the men strike, I can find you women to replace them. Every day I am refusing people who want to be taken on.

GUÉRET [*suddenly*] I have an idea.

FÉLIAT. What 's that?

GUÉRAT. I know my men; they 're not bad fellows.

THÉRÈSE. My workers are splendid women.

GUÉRET. Of course they are. As a matter of fact

we 're face to face now, not with a fight between men and masters, but with a fight between men-workers and women-workers. The men have their trade union, and the women have theirs. Both unions have a President and two Vice-Presidents. Both have their office. We must have a meeting between the two here at once, in a friendly, sensible way, before they 've all had time to excite themselves; and let them find some way out that 'll please 'em all.

FÉLIAT. But, my dear fellow, if you bring them together, they 'll tear one another's eyes out.

GUÉRET. Oh, we know you don't believe the working classes have any sense.

FÉLIAT [*between his teeth*] I don't. I 've been an employer too long.

THÉRÈSE [*to Monsieur Féliat*] Why not try what my godfather suggests? What do you risk?

FÉLIAT. I don't mind. But I will have nothing to do with it personally.

GUÉRET. Neither will I.

THÉRÈSE. I 'll go and see if Berthe and Constance are here. [*To Guéret*] You go and fetch your men. [*She goes out to the left*]

GUÉRET. I give you my word that, if there 's any possible way out, this is the only chance of getting at it.

FÉLIAT. Very well, go and fetch them.

Guéret goes out. Thérèse comes in with Berthe and Constance. They are wearing large aprons and have scissors attached to their waistbelts. Berthe is a fat, ordinary woman. Constance is tall, dry, and ugly.

BERTHE [*respectfully*] Good-morning, Monsieur Féliat.

CONSTANCE [*the same*] Good-morning, Monsieur Féliat.

THÉRÈSE. I want Berthe and Constance to tell you

themselves whether you can count upon them in case of the men striking.

CONSTANCE. Oh yes, Monsieur Féliat. We 'll do anything you want us to.

BERTHE. Oh, Monsieur Féliat, don't send us away!

CONSTANCE [*imploringly*] Oh, Monsieur Féliat, you won't send us away, will you?

BERTHE. We do want the work so, Monsieur.

CONSTANCE. It 's God's truth we do.

FÉLIAT. I 'll do everything possible on my side, but it all depends on yourselves and the men. Try to come to some understanding.

CONSTANCE. Yes, Monsieur.

BERTHE [*lowering her voice*] If you can't pay us quite as much for the mending, we don't mind taking a little less. You 'd keep it dark, would n't you?

FÉLIAT. We 'll see about it.

Girard, Charpin, Deschaume, and Vincent come in.

WORKMEN [*very civil and speaking together*] Good-morning, ladies and gents.

FÉLIAT. Has my brother explained to you why he asked you to meet the representatives of the Women's Union and to try to come to an understanding with them?

GIRARD. Yes, Monsieur Féliat.

CHARPIN. That 's all we want. All friends together, like.

DESCHAUME. That 's the hammer, mate!

FÉLIAT. Then I 'll go. Do try and keep your tempers.

ALL [*speaking together*] Oh yes. To be sure, sir. You need n't trouble, sir.

Féliat goes out. The workmen and workwomen left together shake hands all round without any particular courtesy or cordiality.

CHARPIN. Well, what d' you say to a sit down?

DESCHAUME [*speaking of Charpin*] That lazy swine 's only comfortable when he 's sittin' down.

CHARPIN. I ain't agoing to tire meself for nix, not 'arf!

Berthe and Constance have mechanically brought chairs for the workmen, who take them without any thanks, accustomed as they are to be waited upon. When all are seated they see that Thérèse has been left standing.

CONSTANCE [*rising*] Have my chair, Mademoiselle.

THÉRÈSE. No, thank you, I prefer to stand.

CHARPIN. I see that all our little lot 's here. There 's four on us, but only three 'er you.

DESCHAUME [*meaningly*] One of the hens ain't turned up yet.

CHARPIN [*sniggering*] Perhaps she 's a bit shy, like.

THÉRÈSE. You mean Mother Bougne. You, workmen yourselves, mock at an old woman wrecked by work. But you 're right. She ought to be here. I 'll go and fetch her. Only to look at her would be an argument on our side. [*She goes out to the right*]

DESCHAUME. Mademoiselle Thérèse need n't kick up such a dust about a little thing like that. There 's four on us; so there must be four on you, in case we have to take a vote.

Thérèse comes back with Mother Bougne.

THÉRÈSE [*to the workmen*] Give me a chair. [*They do so*] Sit down, Mother Bougne. [*Insisting*] Mother Bougne, sit down.

MOTHER BOUGNE. Oh, don't trouble, miss, I 'm not used to —

THÉRÈSE [*sharply*] Sit down.

Mother Bougne sits down.

CHARPIN. Well, here 's the bloomin' bunch of us.

DESCHAUME. We 'd best fix up a chairman.

GIRARD. What 's the good of that?

DESCHAUME. We 'd best have you, Girard. You 've education, and you 're up to all the dodges about public meetings.

GIRARD. It 's not worth while.

DESCHAUME. Well, I only put it forrard because it 's the usual. But have it your own way! [*A silence*] Only don't all jaw at once. You 'll see you 'll want a chairman, I tell you that, but I don't care. It ain't my show.

CHARPIN. Get a move on you, Girard, and speak up.

GIRARD. Well, ladies —

VINCENT [*interrupting*] Now look here. I want to get at an understandin'.

THÉRÈSE. Monsieur Girard, will you be kind enough to speak for your friends? We have nothing to say on our part. We 're asking for nothing.

GIRARD. Well, that 's true. We want to have the mending back.

THÉRÈSE. And we don't mean to give it up.

GIRARD. Well, we expected that. Now, to show you that we 're not such a bad lot as you think, we 'll share it with you on two conditions. The first is that you 're paid the same wages as we are.

DESCHAUME. Look here, that won't suit me at all, that won't. If my old woman gets as much as me, how am I to keep her under? Blimey, she 'll think she 's my bloomin' equal!

GIRARD [*impatiently*] Oh, bung her into some other berth. Let me go on. The second condition is that you are n't to have a separate workshop. We 'll all work together as we used to.

THÉRÈSE. Why?

DESCHAUME. You women do a damned sight too much for your ha'pence.

GIRARD. Yes, it 's all in the interests of the masters. It 's against solidarity.

THÉRÈSE. Will you allow me to express my astonishment that you should make conditions with us when you wish to take something from us?

CHARPIN. We 're ony tellin' you our terms for sharing the work with you.

THÉRÈSE. I quite understand; but we have no desire to share it with you. We mean to keep it. And I 'm greatly surprised to hear you suggest that we should all work together.

CONSTANCE. Indeed we won't.

DESCHAUME. Why not, Mademoiselle? When we worked together —

CONSTANCE [*interrupting*] When we worked with you before, you played all sorts of dirty tricks on us to make us leave.

DESCHAUME. What tricks? Did you hear anything about that, Charpin?

CHARPIN. I dunnow what she 's talkin' about. D' you Vincent?

VINCENT. Look here, I only want to get to an understandin'.

CONSTANCE. You never stopped sayin' beastly things.

DESCHAUME AND CARPIN [*protesting together*] Oh! O-ho!

DESCHAUME. Well, if we can't have a bit of chippin' in a friendly way like!

BERTHE. Beastly things like that ain't jokes. I did n't know where to look meself; and I 've sat for a sculptor, so I ain't too particular.

CHARPIN. He! He! I thought she was talkin' about that old joke of the rats.

The men laugh together.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, you 're laughing about it still! About shutting up live rats in our desks before we came to work.

GIRARD. He! He! We did n't mean any harm.

THÉRÈSE. You did n't mean any harm! The little apprentice was ill for a week, and Madame Dumont had a bad fall. You thought of dozens of things of that kind, like the typists who mixed up all the letters on the women's desks. When we went away to get our lunch, you came and spoilt our work and made the women lose a great part of their day's pay or work hours of overtime. We don't want any more of that. You agreed we should have a separate workshop. We 'll keep it.

GIRARD. If Monsieur Féliat sticks to you, we 'll have to come out on strike.

THÉRÈSE. We don't want Monsieur Féliat to get into trouble because of us.

GIRARD. Well, what are you going to do about it?

THÉRÈSE. We 'll take your places.

CHARPIN [*bringing his fist down with a bang upon the table*] Well, I 'm damned!

DESCHAUME [*threateningly*] If you do, we 'll have to put you through it!

CONSTANCE. We 'll *do* it!

GIRARD [*to Thérèse*] D' you understand now, Mademoiselle, why we socialists don't want women in the factory or in the workshop? The woman 's the devil because of the low salary she has to take. She 's a victim, and she likes to be a victim, and so she 's the best card the employer has to play against a strike. The women are too weak, and if I might say so, too slavish —

DESCHAUME. Yes, that 's the word, mate, slavish.

BERTHE [*very angry*] Look at that man there, my husband, and hear what he 's saying before me, his wife, that he makes obey him like a dog. He beats me, he does. You don't trouble about my being what you call slavish when it 's you that profits by it! I 'd

like to know who taught women to be slavish but husbands like you.

THÉRÈSE. You 've so impressed it upon women that they 're inferior to men that they 've ended by believing it.

GIRARD. Well, maybe there 's exceptions, but it 's true in the main.

DESCHAUME. Let 'em stay at home, I says, and cook the bloomin' dinner.

BERTHE. And what 'll they cook the days when you spend all your wages in booze.

GIRARD. It 's the people that started you working that you ought to curse.

BERTHE. I like that! It was my husband himself that brought me to the workshop.

THÉRÈSE. She 's not the only one, eh, Vincent?

VINCENT. But I ain't sayin' nothin', I ain't. What are you turnin' on me for? I ain't sayin' nothin'.

BERTHE. We 'd like nothing better than to stay at home. Why don't you support us there?

CONSTANCE. It 's because you don't support us there that you 've got to let us work.

DESCHAUME. We ain't going to.

BERTHE. We won't give in to you.

GIRARD. If you don't, we 'll turn the job in.

THÉRÈSE. And I tell you that we shall take your places.

DESCHAUME. Rats! You can't do it.

THÉRÈSE. We could n't at one time, that 's true. But now we 've got the machines. The machines drove the women from their homes. Up to lately one had to have a man's strength for the work; now, by just pulling a lever, a woman can do as much and more than the strongest man. The machines revenge us.

DESCHAUME. We 'll smash the things.

GIRARD. She 's right. By God, she 's right! It 's them machines has done it. If any one had told my grandfather a time would come when one chap could keep thousands of spindles running and make hundreds of pairs of stockings in a day, and yards and yards of woollen stuff, and socks and shirts and all, why grandfather 'd 've thought everybody 'd have shirts and socks and comforters and shoes, and there 'd be no more hard work and empty bellies. Curse the damned things! We works longer hours, and there 's just as many bare feet and poor devils shivering for want of clothes. The machines were to give us everything, blast 'em! The workers are rotten fools! The damned machines have made nothing but hate between them that own them and them that work them. They 've used up the women and even the children; and it 's all to sell the things they make to niggers or Chinamen; and maybe we 'll have war about it. They 've made the middle classes rich, and they 're the starvation of all of us; and after they 've done all that, here are the women, our own women, want to help 'em to best us!

MOTHER BOUGNE. You 're right, Girard. When I was a kid, and there was no machines — leastways, not to speak of — we was all better off. Women stayed at home, and they 'd got enough to do. Why, my old grandmother used to fetch water from the well and be out pickin' up sticks before it was light of a mornin'! Yes, and women made their own bread, and did their washin', and made their bits of things themselves! Now it 's machines for everythin', and they say to us: " Come into the factory and you 'll earn big money." And we come, like silly kids! Why, fancy me, eight years old, taken out of the village and bunged into a spinnin' mill! Then, when I was married, there was me in a workman's dwellin'. You turn a tap for your water, don't fetch it; baker's bread, and your bit of

dinner from the cookshop, or preserved meat out of a tin. You don't make a fire, you turn on the gas; your stockin's and togs all fetched out of a shop. There ain't no need for the women to stay at home no longer, so they cuts down the men's wages and puts us in the factories. We ain't got time to suckle our kids; and now they don't want young 'uns any more! But when you 're in the factory, they make yer pay through the nose for yer gas and yer water, and baker's bread and ready-made togs; and you 've got nothin' left out of yer bit of wages, and you 're as poor as ever; and you 're only a "hand" at machines in the damp and smoke, instead of bein' in your own house an' decent like. What are you fussin' about, Girard? Don't you see that we *can't* go back to the old times now? A woman ain't got a house now, only a little room with nothin' but a dirty bed to sleep on! And I tell you, Girard, you 've got to let us earn our livin' like that now, because it 's you and the likes of you that 's brought us to it.

GIRARD. Well, after all, we 've got to look after our living. The women want to take it from us.

MOTHER BOUGNE. It 's because they have n't got any themselves, my lad. They 've got to live as well as you, you see.

GIRARD. And supposing there is n't enough living for everybody?

MOTHER BOUGNE. The strongest 'll get it and the weak 'uns 'll be done in.

GIRARD. Well, we 've not made the world, and we 're not going to have our work taken away from us.

CONSTANCE. And we 're not, either.

DESCHAUME. Damn it all, we 've got to live.

BERTHE. Well, we 've got to live too. The kids has got to live and we 've got to live. One would think we was brute beasts.

CONSTANCE. We say just the same as you. We 've not made the world, it ain't our fault.

During the last few speeches women have appeared at the door to the right and have remained on the threshold, becoming excited by the conversation.

A WOMAN [*at the door*] It ain't our fault.

Some men show themselves at the door at the back.

A MAN. So much the worse for you.

ANOTHER WOMAN. We 've got to live, we 've got to live!

ANOTHER MAN. Ain't we got to live too?

THÉRÈSE. Well, don't drink so much.

The women applaud this speech with enthusiasm.

A WOMAN [*bursting out laughing*] Ha! Ha! Ha!

WOMEN. Right, Mademoiselle! Well done! Good!

They come further forward.

BERTHE. You won't get our work away from us.

DESCHAUME. It 's *our* work; you took it.

BERTHE. You gave it up to us.

A MAN. Well, we 'll take it back from you.

ANOTHER MAN. We were wrong.

ANOTHER MAN. Drive out the Hens.

ANOTHER MAN. The strike! Long live the strike! We 'll come out!

A WOMAN. We 'll take your places; we 've got to live.

A MAN. There 's no living for you here.

A WOMAN. Yes there is; we 'll take yours.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, we 'll take yours. And your wife that you brought here yourself will take your place, Vincent. And you the same, Deschaume. She 'll take your place, and it 'll serve you right. You can stay at home and do the mending to amuse yourself.

GIRARD [*to the women*] This woman from Paris is turning the heads of the lot of you.

CHARPIN. Yes, that 's about the size of it.

VINCENT. She don't play the game. She does as she bloomin' well likes. She would n't engage my old woman. She took women from Duriot's.

GIRARD [*to Thérèse*] That 's it. It 's you that 's doing it. [*To the women*] You 've got to ask the same wages as us.

THÉRÈSE. You know very well —

GIRARD [*interrupting*] It 's all along of your damned Union.

VINCENT. There was n't any ructions till you come.

CHARPIN. We 'll smash the Hens' Union.

A row begins and increases.

A MAN. Put 'em through it! Down 'em! Smash the Hens! Smash 'em!

A WOMAN. Turn out the lazy swines!

A WOMAN [*half mad with excitement*] We 're fightin' for our kids. [*She shrieks this phrase continuously during the noise which follows*]

BERTHE. Turn out the lazy swines!

DESCHAUME [*shaking his wife*] Shut up, blast you, shut up!

ANOTHER MAN [*holding him back*] Don't strike her!

DESCHAUME. It 's my wife; can't I do as I like? [*To Berthe*] Get out, you!

BERTHE. I won't!

Deschaume tries to seize hold of his wife; this starts a general fight between the men and women, during which one distinguishes various cries, finally a man's voice.

A MAN. Damn her, she 's hurt me!

ANOTHER MAN. It 's her scissors! Get hold of her scissors.

Berthe screams.

THÉRÈSE. They 'll kill one another! [*To the women*] Go home, go home; they 'll kill you. Go home at once.

The women are suddenly taken with a panic; they scream and run away, followed by the men.

A Woman. Oh, you brutes! Oh, you brutes!

Thérèse goes out to the right with the women. The men go off with Deschaume, whose hand is bleeding. Girard, who was following them, meets Monsieur Féliat at the door.

Girard [*to Féliat*] Deschaume 's bin hurt, sir.

Féliat. He must be taken to the Infirmary.

Deschaume [*excitedly*] With her scissors she did it, blast 'er!

Charpin. The police, send for the police!

Girard. Don't be a bally fool. We can take care of ourselves, can't we, without the bloomin' coppers.

Deschaume [*shouting*] The police, send for the police! To protect the right to work. Send for 'em.

Girard [*to Monsieur Féliat*] If 't was to bully us, you 'd have sent for 'em long ago. What are you waiting for?

Féliat. I 'm waiting till you kindly allow me to speak. I can't believe my ears. Is it you, Girard, and you, Deschaume, who want to have the police sent for to save you from a pack of women? Ha! Ha!

Charpin. Oh, it makes you laugh, does it?

Girard. You defend the cats because they 're against us. Well, we won't have it. Duriot's men came out —

Charpin. Yes, and we 'll do the same.

Deschaume. We will. Look out for the strike!

Girard. We 're agreed; ain't we, mates?

Charpin and Deschaume [*together*] Yes, yes. We 'll strike. Let 's strike.

Féliat. You don't really mean that you 're going on strike?

Girard. Don't we, though!

Féliat. How can you? I 've given everything you 've asked for.

CHARPIN [*growling*] That 's just the reason.

GIRARD. If you 've given in, that shows we were right. You 'll have to give in some more.

FÉLIAT. Good God, what d' you want now?

CHARPIN. We want you to sack all the women.

DESCHAUME. No we don't. We want you to sack Mademoiselle Thérèse.

FÉLIAT. You 're mad! What harm has she done you?

GIRARD. The harm she 's done us? Well, she 's on your side.

DESCHAUME. She 's turned the women's heads. They want to take our places.

CHARPIN. And we won't have it.

FÉLIAT. Come! Be reasonable. You can't ask me that.

GIRARD. We *do* ask you that.

FÉLIAT. It will upset my whole business.

CHARPIN. What 's that to us?

FÉLIAT. Well, I must have time to think about it.

GIRARD. There 's nothing to think about. Sack the Paris woman or we go on strike.

FÉLIAT. You can't put a pistol to my head like this. I 've got orders in hand.

GIRARD. What 's that to us?

FÉLIAT. Well then, I won't give in this time. You demanded that I should not open a new workshop. I gave in. I won't go further than that.

GIRARD. Then out we go.

FÉLIAT. Well go, and be damned to you. [*Pause*] The women will take your places.

GIRARD. You think so, do you? You think it 's as easy as that. Well, try. Just you try to fill up our places. Have you forgot there 's two delegates here from the Central Committee? A phone to Paris and your bally show is done for.

FÉLIAT. It 's damnable.

GIRARD. And if that does n't choke you off, there 's other things.

CHARPIN. We 'll set the whole bloomin' place on fire.

GIRARD. Don't you try to bully us.

FÉLIAT. Well, look here. We won't quarrel. I 'll send away Mademoiselle Thérèse. But give me a little time to settle things up.

CHARPIN. No; out she goes.

FÉLIAT. Give me a month. I ask only a month.

GIRARD. An hour, that 's all you 'll get, an hour.

CHARPIN. An hour, not more.

GIRARD. We 're going off to meet the delegates at the Hotel de la Poste; you can send your answer there. The Parisian goes out sharp now, or else look out for trouble. Come on, boys, let 's go and tell the others. There 's nothing more to do here.

FÉLIAT. But stop, listen —

CHARPIN [*to Féliat*] That 's our last word. [*To the others*] Hurry on.

The workmen go out. Thérèse has come in a moment before and is standing on the threshold.

FÉLIAT [*to Thérèse*] How much did you hear?

THÉRÈSE. Oh, please, please, don't give in. Don't abandon these women. It 's dreadful in the workroom. They 're in despair. I 've just been with them, talking to them. They get desperate when they think of their children.

FÉLIAT. The men are not asking me now to get rid of them. What they 're asking for is the break-up of your Union, and that you yourself should go.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, they say that now. But if you give in, they 'll see that they can get anything they like from your weakness, and they 'll make you turn out all these wretched women.

FÉLIAT. But I can't help myself! You did n't hear the brutal threats of these men. If I don't give in, I shall be blacklisted, and they 'll set the place on fire; they said so. Where will your women's work be then? And I shall be ruined.

THÉRÈSE. Then you mean to give in without a struggle?

FÉLIAT. Would *you* like to take the responsibility for what will happen if I resist? There 'll be violence. Just think what it 'll mean. In the state the men are in anything may happen. There 's a wounded man already. How many would there be tomorrow?

THÉRÈSE. You think only of being beaten. But suppose you win? Suppose you act energetically and get the best of it.

FÉLIAT. My energy would be my ruin.

THÉRÈSE [*with a change of tone*] Then you wish me to go?

FÉLIAT. I have only made up my mind to it to prevent something worse.

THÉRÈSE [*very much moved*] It 's impossible you can sacrifice me in this way at the first threat. Look here, Monsieur Féliat; perhaps it does n't come very well from me, but I can't help reminding you that you 've said repeatedly yourself that I 've been extremely useful to you. Don't throw me overboard without making one try to save me.

FÉLIAT. It would be no use.

THÉRÈSE. How can you tell? It 's your own interest to keep me. The delegate said that if I go they 'll break up the Women's Union and make the women take the same wages as the men.

FÉLIAT. They won't do that because they know I would n't keep them.

THÉRÈSE. You see! If you give in, it means the

break-up of the whole thing and the loss to you of the saving I 've made for you. And you have obligations to these women who have been working for you for years.

FÉLIAT. If I have to part with them, I will see they are provided for.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, for a day — a week, perhaps. But afterwards? What then? Little children will be holding out their hands for food to mothers who have none to give them.

FÉLIAT. But, good God, what have *I* to do with that? Is it my fault? Don't you see that I 'm quite powerless in the matter?

THÉRÈSE. No, you 're not quite powerless. You can choose which you will sacrifice, the women who have been perfectly loyal to you, or the men who want to wring from your weakness freedom from competition which frightens them.

FÉLIAT. They 're fighting for their daily bread.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, fighting the woman because she works for lower wages. She can do that because she is sober and self-controlled. Is it because of her virtues that you condemn her?

FÉLIAT. I know all that as well as you do, and I tell you again the women can go on working just as they were working before you came.

THÉRÈSE. You 'll be made to part with them.

FÉLIAT. We shall see. But at present that 's not the question. The present thing is about you. One of us has to be sacrificed, you or me. I can see only one thing. If I stick to you, my machinery will be smashed and my works will be burned. I 'm deeply sorry this has happened, and I don't deny for a moment the great value of your services; but, after all, I can't ruin myself for your sake.

THÉRÈSE [*urgently*] But you *would n't* be ruined.

Defend yourself, take measures. Ask for assistance from the Government.

FÉLIAT. The Government can't prevent the strike.

THÉRÈSE. But the women will do the work.

FÉLIAT. You think of nothing but your women. And the men? They 'll be starving, won't they? And their women and their children will starve with them.

THÉRÈSE [*almost in tears*] And me, you have no pity for me. What 's to become of me? If you abandon me, I 'm done for. I 'd made a career for myself. I had realized my dreams. I was doing a little good. And I was so deeply grateful to you for giving me my chance. I 'm all alone in the world, you know that very well. Before I came here I tried every possible way to earn my living. Oh, please don't send me away. Don't drive me back into that. Try once again, do something. Let *me* speak to the men. It 's all my life that 's at stake. If you drive me out, I don't know where to go to.

Monsieur Guéret comes in.

GUÉRET [*greatly excited*] Féliat, we must n't wait a moment; we must give in at once. They 're exciting themselves; they 're mad; they 're getting worse; they may do anything. They 've gone to the women's workroom and they 're driving them out.

From the adjoining workshop there comes a crash of glass and the sound of women screaming.

THÉRÈSE [*desperately*] Go, Monsieur! Go quickly! Don't let anything dreadful happen. You 're right. I 'll leave at once. Go!

Monsieur Guéret and Monsieur Féliat rush into the women's workshop. The noise increases; there is a sound of furniture overthrown and the loud screams of women.

THÉRÈSE [*alone, clasping her hands*] Oh, God! Oh, God!

Thérèse stands as if hypnotized by terror, her eyes wide open and fixed upon the door of the workshop. The noise still increases; there is a revolver shot, then a silence. Finally the voice of Monsieur Féliat is heard speaking, though the words are not intelligible, and a shout of men's voices. Then Monsieur Guéret comes in very pale.

GUÉRET. Don't be frightened, it's all over. The shot was fired in the air. The men have gone out; there are only the women now — crying in the workshop.

THÉRÈSE. Are you sure nobody is killed? Is it true, oh, tell me, is it really true?

Monsieur Féliat comes in.

FÉLIAT. Poor Thérèse! Don't be frightened.

THÉRÈSE. Oh, those screams! Those dreadful screams! Is it true, really, nobody was hurt?

FÉLIAT. Nobody, I assure you.

THÉRÈSE. The shot?

FÉLIAT. Fired in the air, to frighten the women. The men broke in the door, and upset a bench, and made a great row. I got there just in time. As soon as they were promised what they want they were quiet.

THÉRÈSE [*after a pause, slowly*] They were promised what they want. So it's done. [*A silence*] Then there's nothing left for me but to go.

GUÉRET. Where are you going to?

FÉLIAT. You need n't go at once.

THÉRÈSE. Yes, I'm going at once. [*A silence*] I'm going where I'm forced to go.

FÉLIAT. You can leave to-morrow or the day after.

THÉRÈSE. No, I leave by train, this evening, for Paris.

CURTAIN.

FALSE GODS

CHARACTERS

THE PHARAOH
THE HIGH PRIEST
RHEOU
SATNI
PAKH
SOKITI
BITIOU, the dwarf
NOURM
THE STEWARD
THE EXORCIST
A PRIEST
THE PARALYZED YOUTH
THE MAN WITH THE BANDAGED HEAD
THE TWO SONS OF THE MAD WOMAN

MIERIS
YAOUMA
KIRJIPA
ZAYA
DELETHI
NAGAOU
HANOU
NAHASI
SITSINIT
MOUENE
NAZIT
THE YOUNG WOMAN
THE MOTHER
THE BLIND GIRL
FIVE MOURNERS

The Scene is laid in Upper Egypt during the Middle Empire.

ACT I

SCENE: — *The first inner court of the house of Rheou. At the back between two lofty pylons the entrance leading up from below. Through the columns supporting the hanging garden which stretches across the back can be seen the Nile. A high terrace occupies the left of the scene. Steps lead up to it, and from there to the hanging garden. Along the side of the terrace a small delicately carved wooden statue of Isis stands on a sacrificial table. On the right is the peristyle leading to the inner dwelling of Akhounti. The bases of the columns are in the form of lotus buds, the shafts like lotus stems, the capitals full blown flowers. In the spaces between the columns are wooden statues of the gods.*

Delethi is playing a harp. Nagaou dances before her. Nahasi is juggling with oranges, while Mouene sits watching a little bird in a cage. Yaouma reclines on the terrace supporting her head on her elbows and gazing out at the Nile. Zaya is beside her. On a carpet Sitsinit, lying flat upon her stomach with a writing box by her side, is busy painting an ibis on the left hand of Hanou, who lies in a similar attitude.

SITSI. Did you not know? She, on whose left hand a black ibis has been painted, is certain of a happy day.

HANOU. A happy day! Why then, 't is I, perhaps, who will be chosen to-night!

DELETHI [*playing the harp while Nagaou dances before her*] More slowly! — more slowly! . . . you must make them think of the swaying of a lotus flower, that

the Nile's slow-moving current would bear away, and that raises itself to kiss again the waters of the stream.

NAGAOU. Yes, yes. . . . Begin again!

NAHASI [*juggling with oranges*] Nagaou would let herself be borne away without a struggle. [*She laughs*].

MOUENE [*hopping on one foot*] We know that she goes to the bank of the Nile, at the hour when the palm-trees grow black against the evening sky, to listen to a basket maker's songs.

HANOU [*to Sitsinit*] And this morning I anointed my whole body with Kyphli, mixed with cinnamon and terra-bine and myrrh.

DELETHI [*to Nagaou*] 'T is well . . . you may dance the great prayer to Isis with the rest.

NAGAOU [*to Mouene*] Yes! I do go to listen to songs at dark. You are still too little for anyone, basket maker or any other, to take notice of you.

MOUENE. You think so! . . . who gave me this little bird? [*She draws the bird from the cage by a string attached to its leg*] Who caught thee, flower-of-the-air, who gave thee to me? [*Holding up a finger*] Do not tell! Do not tell. . . .

HANOU [*looking at herself in a metal mirror*] Sitsinit . . . the black line that lengthens this eye is too short . . . make it longer with your reed. I think the more beautiful I am, the more chance I shall have to be chosen for the sacrifice. . . . Is it not so, Zaya? . . . What are you doing there without a word?

ZAYA. I was watching the flight of a crane with hanging feet, that melted away in the distant blue of heaven. . . . Do not hope to be chosen by the gods, Hanou.

HANOU. Wherefore should I not be chosen?

ZAYA. Neither you nor any who are here. The gods never demand the sacrifice two years together from the same village.

HANOU. Never?

ZAYA. Rarely.

HANOU. 'T is a pity. Is it not, Nagaou?

NAGAOU. I know not.

SITSI. Would it not make you proud?

NAGAOU. Yes. But it makes me proud, too, to lean on the breast of him whose words still the beating of my heart.

DELETHI. To be taken by a god! By the Nile!

HANOU. Preferred to all the others!

MOUENE [*the youngest*] For my part I should prefer to live. . . .

SITSI. Still, if the God desired you. . . .

ZAYA. Oh! one can refuse. . . .

DELETHI. Yes, but one must leave the country, then. . . . None of the daughters of Haka-Phtah could bring themselves to that.

A pause.

YAOUMA [*to herself*] Perhaps!

NAHASI. What do you say, Yaouma?

YAOUMA. Nothing. I was speaking to my soul.

MOUENE. Yaouma's eyes weep for weariness because they watch far off for him, who comes not.

YAOUMA. Peace, child.

ZAYA [*to Delethi*] One thing is certain, someone must go upon the sacred barge?

DELETHI. Without the sacrifice the Nile would not overflow, and all the land would remain barren.

HANOU. And the corn would not sprout, nor the beans, nor the maize, nor the lotus.

DELETHI. And all the people would perish miserably.

HANOU. So that she who dies, sacrificed to the Nile, saves the lives of a whole people. That is a better thing, Nagaou, than to make one man's happiness.

A pause.

YAOUMA [*to herself*] Perhaps.

HANOU. And on the appointed day one is borne from the house of the god to the Nile, surrounded by all the dwellers in the town. . . . The Pharaoh — health and strength be unto him! . . .

DELETHI. You do not know, Hanou, you tell us what you do not know.

HANOU. But it is so, is it not, Zaya? Zaya knows about the ceremony, because last year it was her sister who was chosen.

MOUENE. Tell us, Zaya.

NAHASI. Yes, tell us the manner of it.

ZAYA. On the fifth day of the month of Paophi. . . .

MOUENE. To-day — that is to-day?

NAHASI. Yes. What will happen. . . . The prayer of Isis. . . . But afterwards? Before?

They gather round Zaya.

ZAYA. Before the sun has ended his day's journey, the people, summoned to the terraces by a call from the Temple, will intone the great hymn to Isis, which is sung but once a year. Within the house of the god the assembled priests will await the sign that shall reveal the virgin to be offered to the Nile to obtain its yearly flood. The name of the chosen will be cried from the doorway on high, caught up by those who hear it first, cried out to others, who in turn will cry it running towards the house that Ammon has favored with his choice. Then shall the happy victim of the year stand forth alone, amid her kinsfolk bowed before her, and to her ears shall rise the shoutings of the multitude.

ALL. Oh!

DELETHI. And after a month of purification she will be borne to the house of the god!

ZAYA. And on the day of Prodigies . . .

NAHASI. Oh, the day of Prodigies!

ZAYA. She will be the foremost nearer to the Sanctu-

ary than all the rest. She will pray with the praying crowd, she will behold the lowering of the stone that hides the face of Isis. . . .

DELETHI. She will behold Isis — face to face. . . .

ALL. Oh!

ZAYA. She will beg the goddess graciously to incline her head, in sign that, yet another year, Egypt shall be protected. And when the fervor of the crowd's united prayer is great enough, the head of the Goddess of Stone will bow. That will be the first prodigy.

DELETHI. The head of the Goddess of Stone will bow — that will be the first prodigy.

ZAYA. And in the crowd there will be blind who shall see, and deaf who shall hear, and dumb who shall speak.

DELETHI. Perhaps Mieris, our good mistress, will be cured of her blindness at last.

HANOU. And when she who is chosen goes forth from the house of the God. . . . Tell us, Zaya, tell us the manner of her going forth.

ZAYA. Three days before the appointed day, in the town and throughout the land, they will begin the preparations for the festival. When the moment comes, the crowd will surge before the temple, guarded by Lybian soldiers. And she, she, the elect, the saviour, will come forth, ringed by the high priests of Ammon in purple and in gold, and aloft on a chariot where perfumes burn, deafened by sound of trumpet and cries of joy, she will behold the people stretch unnumbered arms to her. . . .

ALL. Oh!

DELETHI. And she will be borne to the Nile. . . .

ZAYA. And she will be borne to the Nile. She will board the barge of Ammon. . . .

DELETHI. And the barge will glide from the bank. . . .

ZAYA. And the barge will glide from the bank where all the crowd will bow their faces to the dust. [*She*

stops, greatly moved] And when the barge returns she will be gone.

ALL [*in low tones*] And when the barge returns she will be gone.

ZAYA. And after two days the waters of the Nile will rise.

ALL. The waters of the Nile will rise. . . .

DELETHI. And as far as the waters flow they will speak her name, who made the sacrifice, with blessings and with tears.

HANOU. If it were I! . . .

ALL [*save Yaouma*] If it were I! . . .

Yaouma rises to a sitting posture.

ZAYA. If it were you, Yaouma?

YAOUMA. Perhaps I should refuse.

ALL. Oh!

MOUENE [*mischievously*] I know why! I know why!

DELETHI. We know why.

ZAYA. Tell us. . . .

YAOUMA. Tell them. . . .

DELETHI. 'T is the same reason that has held you there this many a day.

YAOUMA. Yes.

MOUENE. She watches for the coming of the galley with twenty oars, bearing the travellers from the North. There is a young priest among them, the potter's son.

DELETHI. A young priest, the potter's son, who went away two years ago.

YAOUMA. He is my betrothed.

NAHASI. But you know what they say?

ZAYA. They say that on the same boat there comes a scribe who preaches of new gods. . . .

YAOUMA. I know.

DELETHI. Of false gods.

MOUENE. The priests will stop the boat, and eight

days hence, perhaps, Yaouma will still be awaiting her betrothed.

YAOUMA. I shall wait.

The Steward enters and whispers to Delethi.

DELETHI. The mistress sends word the hour is come to go indoors.

They go out L, Sitsinit picking up the writing box, Nahasi juggling with oranges, Mouene carrying her cage and dancing about, Delethi plays her harp singing with Hanou and Nagaou.

Black is the hair of my love,
More black than the brows of the night,
Than the fruit of the plum tree.

The Steward, who had gone out, returns at once, whip in hand, followed by a poor old man, half naked, and covered with mud, who carries a hod.

STEWARD [*stopping before the statue of Thoueris*] There. Draw near, potter, and look. By some mischance, the horn and the plume of Goddess Thoueris have been broken. The master must not see them when he comes back for the feast of the Nomination. There is the horn — there is the plume. Replace them.

PAKH [*with terror*] I — must I . . . to-day when my son is coming home?

STEWARD. Are you not our servant?

PAKH. I am.

STEWARD. And a potter?

PAKH. I am.

STEWARD. Did you not say you knew how to do what I ask?

PAKH. I did not know that I must lay hands on the Goddess Thoueris.

STEWARD. Obey.

PAKH [*throwing himself on his knees*] I pray you! I pray you . . . I should never dare. And then . . .

my son . . . my son who is coming back from a long, long journey . . .

STEWARD. You shall have twenty blows of the stick for having tired my tongue. If you refuse to obey me you shall have two hundred.

PAKH. I pray you.

STEWARD. Bid Sokiti help you.

He goes out at the back; as he passes he gives Sokiti a blow with his whip, making a sign to him to go and join Pakh.

Sokiti obeys without manifesting sorrow or surprise.

PAKH. He says we must lift down the Goddess.

SOKITI. I?

PAKH. You and I.

SOKITI [*beginning to tremble. After a pause*] I am afraid.

PAKH. I too — I am afraid.

SOKITI. If you touch her you die.

PAKH. You will die of the stick if you do not obey.

SOKITI. Why cannot they leave me at my work. I was happy.

PAKH. We must — we must tell her that it is in order to repair her crown.

SOKITI. Yes. We must let her know.

They prostrate themselves before the goddess.

PAKH. Oh, Mighty One! — thou who hast given birth to the gods, pardon if our miserable hands dare to touch thee! Thy horn and thy right plume have fallen off. 'T is to replace them.

SOKITI. We are forced to obey — O breath divine — creator of the universe. . . . It is to mend thee.

PAKH [*rising, to Sokiti*] Come!

Bitiou, the dwarf, enters; he is a poor deformed creature. When he sees Pakh and Sokiti touching the statue, he tries to run away. He falls, picks himself up, and hides in a corner. By degrees he watches and draws

near during what follows. Pakh and Sokiti take the statue from its pedestal and set it upright on the ground.

SOKITI. She has not said anything.

PAKH. She must be laid on her belly.

SOKITI. Gently. . . .

They lay her flat.

PAKH [*giving him the horn*] Hold that. [*He goes to his hod, takes a handful of cement, and proceeds to mend the statue*] Here . . . the plume . . . so . . . there . . . we must let her dry. In the meantime let us go look upon the Nile; we may see the boat that brings my son.

SOKITI. You will not see him.

PAKH. I shall not see him?

SOKITI. He is a priest.

PAKH. Not yet.

SOKITI. But he was brought up in the temple . . . 't is to the temple he will go.

PAKH. He will come here . . . because he would see his father and mother once more.

SOKITI. And Yaouma his betrothed.

PAKH. And Yaouma his betrothed.

He goes R. Bitiou approaches the statue timidly, and stops some way off.

SOKITI. There is nothing in sight.

PAKH. No. . . . [*suddenly*] You saw the crocodile?

SOKITI. Yes. . . . There is a woman going to the Nile with her pitcher on her head.

PAKH. That is my wife, that is Kirjipa, that is mine. She seeks with her eyes the boat that bears her son — Satni.

SOKITI. She is going into the stream.

PAKH. How else can she draw clear water?

SOKITI. But at the very spot where the crocodile plunged.

PAKH. What matter? She wears the feather of an

ibis . . . and I know a magic spell. [*He begins to chant*] Back, son of Sitou! Dare not! Seize not! Open not thy jaws! Let the water become a sheet of flame before thee! The spell of thirty-seven gods is in thine eye. Thou art bound, thou art bound! Stay, son of Sitou! Ammon, spouse of thy mother, protect her!

SOKITI [*without surprise*] It is gone.

PAKH [*without surprise*] It could not do otherwise.

Bitiou, now close to the statue, touches it furtively with a finger tip, then runs, falls, and picks himself up. He comes up to Pakh and Sokiti.

SOKOTI [*pointing to the statue*] She is dry now, perhaps?

PAKH. Yes, come.

SOKITI. I am afraid still.

PAKH. So am I, but come and help me.

They replace the statue on its pedestal, then step back to look at it.

SOKITI. She has done us no harm.

PAKH. No.

SOKITI. Ha! ha!

PAKH. Ha! ha! ha! ha! [*Bitiou laughs with them. A distant sound of trumpets is heard. Sokiti and Pakh go to the terrace to look*] It is the chief of the Nome. They are bearing him to the city of the dead. At this moment his soul is before the tribunal, where Osiris sits with the two and forty judges.

SOKITI. May they render unto him all the evil he has done! . . .

PAKH. The evil he has done will be rendered unto him a thousand fold. . . . He will pass first into the lake of fire.

SOKITI [*laughing*] Pakh! Pakh! picture him in Amenti — in the hidden place —

PAKH. I see him . . . the pivot of the gate of

Amenti set upon his eye, turns upon his right eye, and turns on that eye whether in opening or in shutting, and his mouth utters loud cries.

SOKITI [*doubling up with delight*] And he who ate so much! . . . He who ate so much! He will have his food, bread and water, hung above his head, and he will leap to get it down, whilst others will dig holes beneath his feet to prevent his touching it.

PAKH. Because his crimes are found to outnumber his merits. . . .

SOKITI. And we — we — say — what will happen to us?

PAKH. We shall be found innocent by the two and forty judges.

SOKITI. And after? — after?

PAKH. We shall go to the island of the souls — in Amenti —

SOKITI. Yes, where there will be . . . Speak. What shall we have in the island of the souls?

PAKH. Baths of clear water. . . .

SOKITI [*with loud laughter*] What else . . . what else?

PAKH. Ears of corn of two arms' length. . . . [*Laughing*].

SOKITI [*laughing*] Yes, ears of corn, of two arms' length.

PAKH. And bread of maize, and beans. . . .

SOKITI. And blows of the stick — say, will there be blows of the stick?

PAKH. Never again.

SOKITI. Never again. . . .

PAKH. I shall forget all I have endured.

SOKITI. I shall be famished; and I shall be able to eat until my hunger is gone . . . every day!

BITIOU. And I — I shall be tall, with straight strong legs, like the rest of the world.

PAKH. That will be better than having been prince on the earth.

They laugh. The Steward appears.

STEWARD. What are you doing there? [*Striking them with the whip*] Your mistress comes! Begone!

They go out.

The Steward bows low before Mieris who is blind, and who enters with her arms full of flowers and led by Yaouma.

The Steward retires.

MIERIS [*gently*] Leave me, Yaouma — I shall be able to find my way to her, alone.

YAOUMA. Yes, mistress. . . . [*Nevertheless, she goes with her noiselessly*].

MIERIS [*smiling*] I can feel you do not obey. Be not afraid. [*She has come as far as the little statue of Isis*] You see, I do not lose my way. I have come every day to bring her flowers, a long, long time. . . . Leave me.

YAOUMA. Yes, mistress.

She withdraws.

MIERIS [*touching the statue in the manner of the blind*] Yes, thou art Isis. I know thy face, and I can guess thy smile. [*She takes some of the flowers which she has laid beside her and lays them one by one on the pedestal of the statue*] Behold my daily offering! I know this for a white lotus flower. It is for thee. I am not wrong, this one, longer, and with the heavier scent, is the pink lotus. It is for thee. And here are yet two more of these sacred flowers. At dawn, they come from out the water, little by little. At midday they open wide. And when the sun sinks they, too, hide themselves, letting the waters of the Nile cover them like a veil. Men say they are fair to see. Alas, I know not the beauty of the gifts I bring! Here is a typha . . . here an alisma; and by the overpowering perfume,

this, I know, is the acacia flower. I have had them tell me how the light, playing through the filmy petals, tints them with color sweet unto the eyes. May the sight gladden thine! I know not the beauty of the gifts I bring! But all the days of my life, a suppliant I shall come, and weary not to ply thee with my prayers, until in the end thou absolve me, until thou grant me the boon that all save I enjoy, to behold the rays of the shining God, of Ammon-Ra, the Sun divine. O Isis, remember the cruel blow that did befall me! I had a little child. Unto him sight was given, and when he first could speak, it was life's sweetest joy, to hear him tell the color and the form of things. He is dead, Isis! And I have never seen him — Take thou my tears and my prayer, bid this perpetual night, wherein I scarce can breathe, to cease — And if thou wilt not, deliver me to death — She-who-loves-the-silence, and after the judgment I may go to Amenti, and find my well-beloved child — find him, and there at last behold his face. Isis, I give thee all these flowers. [*She rises*] Come, Yaouma. [*As she is about to go, she stops, suddenly radiant*] Stay — I hear — yes! Go, bring the ewer and the lustral water. It is the master — He is here.

Yaouma goes out, but returns quickly. Enter Rheou.

MIERIS. Be welcome unto your house, master!

Yaouma pours water over the hands of Rheou and gives him a towel.

RHEOU. Gladly I greet you once more in your house, mistress! [*Pakh appears, returning to look for his hod*] [*To Pakh*] Well! potter, do you not go to meet your son?

PAKH. I would fain go, master, but I looked upon the Nile a while ago; there is nothing in sight.

RHEOU. The galley came last night at dusk, and, by order of the priests, was kept at the bend of the river till now. Go!

PAKH. I thank you, master.

He goes out.

RHEOU. Is all made ready for the solemn prayer to Isis? The sun is nearing the horizon.

MIERIS. Yaouma, go and warn them all.

YAOUMA [*kneeling in supplication*] Mistress —

MIERIS [*laying her hand on Yaouma's head*] What is it?

YAOUMA. The galley.

MIERIS. Well? — Ah, yes! you were betrothed to the potter's son — But to-day you must not go forth. Who shall say you are not she whom the God Ammon will choose?

YAOUMA. The God Ammon knows not me.

MIERIS. Did he choose you, he must know you.

YAOUMA. Me! Me! A poor handmaiden — Is it then possible — truly?

MIERIS. Truly — Yaouma, go.

YAOUMA [*to herself as she goes*] The God Ammon — the God of Gods —

MIERIS. Rheou, what ails you?

RHEOU [*angered*] It was a fresh insult that awaited me —

MIERIS. Insult?

RHEOU. When I came into the audience chamber I prostrated myself before the Pharaoh. "What would you?" he cried in that hard voice of his. You know 't is the custom to make no reply, that one may seem half dead with fear before his majesty —

MIERIS. Did you not so?

RHEOU. I did, but he —

MIERIS. Have a care! Is no one there who might overhear you?

RHEOU. No one — but he, in place of ordering them to raise me up, in place of bidding me speak — Oh, the dog of an Ethiopian! — he feigned not to see me — for

a long while, a long, long while — At length, when he remembered I was there, anger was choking me; he saw it; he declared an evil spirit was in me, and having ridiculed me with his pity, he bade me then withdraw. He forgets that if I wished —

MIERIS. Be still! Be still! Know you not that there, beside you, are the Gods who hear you!

RHEOU [*derisively*] Oh! the Gods!

MIERIS. What mean you?

RHEOU [*derisively*] I am the son of a high priest, I know the Gods — The Pharaoh forgets that were I to remind the people of my father's services, were I to arm all those who work for me, and let them loose against him —

MIERIS. Rheou! Rheou!

RHEOU. Think you they would not obey me? I am son of that high priest, the Pharaoh's friend who wished to replace the Gods of Egypt, by one only God. The court cannot forgive me for that. Little they dream, that were I to declare my father had appeared to me, all those who know me, all the poor folk whose backs are blistered by the tax-gatherer's whip, all who are terrorized by schemes of foreign war — all, all would take my orders as inspired, divine.

MIERIS. The fear of the Gods would hold them back.

RHEOU. How long — I wonder!

MIERIS. I hear them coming for the prayer.

RHEOU. Yes. Let us pray — that they may have nothing to reproach me with before I choose my hour.

MIERIS. What hour?

RHEOU. Could I but realize the work my father dreamed of — and at the same stroke be avenged — avenged for all the humiliations —

MIERIS. Be silent — I hear —

The singers and the dancers and all the women and servants come on gradually.

RHEOU [*going to the terrace*] The sun is not yet down upon the hill. But look — upon the Nile — see, Yaouma! 't is the galley that bears your betrothed.

YAOUMA. 'T is there! 'T is there! — See — it has stopped — they take the mallet, and drive in the stake. The boat's prow is aground. Now they have prayed — they disembark. Look, there is the strange scribe!

RHEOU [*looking*] A stranger — he — I do not think it.

YAOUMA. I thought, from his garments, perhaps —

Pakh returns.

RHEOU. Did you not wait for your son?

PAKH [*terrified*] Master, on the road that leads to the Nile, I beheld two dead scarabs —

RHEOU. None, then, save the High Priest, may pass till the road be purified.

PAKH. I have warned the travellers they must go a long way round.

RHEOU. Did you not recognise your son?

PAKH. No, he will be among the last to land, perhaps.

YAOUMA. But look — look! Behold that man — the stranger who comes this way alone — Pakh! where were they, Pakh — the scarabs?

PAKH. Near to the fig tree.

YAOUMA [*terrified*] He is about to pass them — Oh! He does not know — [*Relieved*] Ah! at last, they warn him.

RHEOU. He stays.

YAOUMA. Near to the fig tree, said you! But he is going on — He moves — he comes —He is past them — [*To Mieris*] Come, mistress, come! Oh Ammon! Ammon!

Hiding her face she leads Mieris quickly away.

RHEOU. 'T is to our gates he comes — he is here.

Satni enters.

SATNI [*bowing before Rheou*] Rheou, I salute you!

RHEOU. What do I behold! Satni — 't is you —

PAKH. My son!

SATNI [*kneeling*] Father!

PAKH. 'T was you! — you, who came that way, despite the scarabs?

SATNI. It was I.

PAKH. You know then some magic words, I do not doubt; but I — I who saw them — I must needs go purify myself before the prayer — to-day is the feast of the Nomination — did you know?

SATNI. I knew — and Yaouma?

PAKH. She is here — in a little you shall see her.

RHEOU. Satni!

SATNI. You called me?

RHEOU. Yes. Did not you see the two scarabs that lay upon your path?

SATNI. I saw them.

RHEOU. And you did not stop?

SATNI. No.

RHEOU. Why?

SATNI. I have learned many things in the countries whence I come.

RHEOU. You are a priest. Was not your duty to go unto the temple, even before you knelt at your father's feet?

SATNI. Never again shall I enter the temple.

A long trumpet call is heard far off.

RHEOU. It is the signal for the prayer.

He mounts the terrace and stretches his arms to the setting sun. Women play upon the harp and upon drums, and the double flute. Others clash cymbals and shake the sistrum. Dancers advance, slowly swaying their bodies. The rest mark the rhythm by the beating of hands.

Music.

RHEOU. O Isis! Isis! Isis! Three times do I pronounce thy name.

ALL [*murmuring*] O Isis! Isis! Isis! Three times do I pronounce thy name.

RHEOU. O Isis! thou who preservest the grain from the destroying winds, and the bodies of our fathers from the ruinous work of time.

ALL [*murmuring*] O Isis! thou who preservest the grain from the destroying winds, and the bodies of our fathers from the ruinous work of time.

RHEOU. O Isis! preserve us.

ALL [*murmuring*] O Isis! preserve us.

RHEOU. By the three times thy name is spoken.

ALL [*murmuring*] By the three times thy name is spoken.

RHEOU. Both here, and there, and there.

ALL [*murmuring*] Both here, and there, and there.

RHEOU. And to-day, and all days, and throughout the ages, as long as our temples are mirrored in the waters of the Nile.

ALL [*murmuring*] And to-day, and all days, and throughout the ages, as long as our temples are mirrored in the waters of the Nile.

RHEOU. Isis!

ALL [*murmuring*] Isis!

RHEOU. Isis!

ALL [*murmuring*] Isis!

RHEOU. Isis!

ALL [*murmuring*] Isis!

All prostrate themselves save the singers and the dancers.

RHEOU. We beseech thee, Ammon! Deign to make known the virgin who will be offered to the Nile. Ammon, deign to make her known!

ALL [*murmuring*] Deign to make her known.

The music stops. A long pause in silence. Then far off a trumpet call.

RHEOU. Rise! The God has made his choice.

All rise, and begin chattering and laughing gaily.

RHEOU [*to Satni*] You, alone, did not pray, and stood the while. Wherefore?

SATNI. I have come from a land where I learned wisdom.

RHEOU. You! — You who were to be priest of Ammon!

SATNI. I shall never be priest of Ammon.

VOICES. Listen! Listen! — The name! They begin to cry the name!

The distant sound of voices is heard. Every one in the scene save Satni is listening intently.

RHEOU. The name! The name!

He mounts the terrace. The setting sun reddens the heavens.

SATNI [*to Yaouma*] At last I find you again, Yaouma. And you wear still the chain of maidenhood. You have waited for me?

YAOUMA. Yes, Satni, I have waited for you.

SATNI. The memory of you went with me always.

YAOUMA. Listen! — [*Distant sound of voices*].

A WOMAN. Methinks 't is Raouit of the next village.

A MAN. No! No! 'T is not that name.

SATNI [*to Yaouma*] What matter their cries to you. Have you forgot our promises?

YAOUMA. No — Listen! — [*Voices nearer*].

A WOMAN. 'T is Amterra! 'T is Amterra!

ANOTHER. No! 'T is Hihourr!

ANOTHER. No! Amterra lives the other way.

ANOTHER. One can hear nothing clearly now.

ANOTHER. They are passing behind the palm grove.

SATNI [*to Yaouma*] Answer me — you have ears only for their clamor — I love you, Yaouma.

A Voice. They are coming! They are coming!

Another. Then 't is Karma, of the next house.

Another. No! 't is Hene. Ahou, I tell you — or Karma! Karma!

Satni [*to Yaouma*] Have you, then, ceased to love me?

Yaouma [*distracted*] No, no, I love you — Satni — but I seem to hear my name amid the cries —

Satni. Let them cry your name — I will watch over you.

Yaouma. Oh, Satni! If the God have chosen me?

Satni. What God? It is the priests who make him speak.

The sounds come nearer.

A Voice. 'T is Yaouma! they come here! Quick, quick, let us do them honor on their coming.

Another. No!

Another. Yes!

Another. 'T is she!

Another. No!

Another. Yes! yes! Yaouma!

Satni [*to Yaouma*] Do not be fooled. The God is but a stone.

Yaouma [*who no longer listens*] I have heard. It is my name — my name!

A Voice. They are coming! —

Another. They are here!

Every one begins to go out.

Another [*going*] 'T is Yaouma!

Loud shouts without — " 'T is Yaouma — 'T is Yaouma — "

Steward [*to Rheou*] Master, it is Yaouma.

Rheou. Go, as 't is custom, let all go forth to meet those who come.

All go out save Yaouma and Satni.

Satni. 'T is you —

YAOUMA [*radiant*] 'T is I!

SATNI. You may refuse.

YAOUMA. And leave Egypt —

SATNI. We will leave it together.

YAOUMA. 'T is I! Think of it, Satni! The God, out of all my companions, the God has chosen me!

SATNI. Do not stay here. Come with me.

YAOUMA [*listening*] Yes — yes — You hear them? It is I!

SATNI. You are going to refuse!

YAOUMA [*with a radiant smile*] You would love me no longer, if I refused.

SATNI. But know you not, it is death?

YAOUMA [*in ecstasy*] Yes, Satni, it is death!

SATNI. You are mine — You are plighted to me — Come — Come!

YAOUMA. Satni — Satni — you would not have me refuse?

SATNI. I would. I love you.

YAOUMA. Refuse to answer the call of the Gods.

SATNI. The call of the Gods is death.

YAOUMA. The God has chosen me, before all he has preferred me. He has preferred me to those who are fairer, to those who are richer. And I should hide myself!

SATNI. It is out of pride then that you would die?

YAOUMA. I die to bring the flooding of the Nile — to make fertile all the Egyptian fields. If I answer not to the voices that call me, my name will be a byword wherever the rays of the sun-God fall. Another than I will go clothed in the dazzling robe. Another will hear the shouting of the multitude. Another will be given to the Nile.

SATNI. Another will die, and you, you will live, for your own joy and for mine.

YAOUMA. For my own shame and for yours.

SATNI. Light the world with your beauty. Live, Yaouma, live with me! Bright shall your breast be with the flower of the persea, and your tresses anointed heavy with sweet odor.

YAOUMA. The waves of the Nile will be my head-dress. Oh! fair green robe, with flowers yet more fair.

SATNI. Yaouma, you loved me — [*She bends her head*] Remember, remember my going away, but two years since, how you did weep when I embarked. You ran by the bank, you followed the boat that bore me. I see you still, the slim form, the swift lank limbs; I can hear still the sound of your little naked feet upon the sand. And when the boat grounded — do you remember? For hours the oarsmen pushed with long poles, singing the while, and you clapping your hands and crying out my name. And when at length we floated, there was laughter and cries of joy — but you, you did stand all on a sudden still, and I knew then that you wept. You climbed to a hillock, and you waved your arms, you grew smaller, smaller, smaller, till we turned by a cluster of palms. Oh, how you promised to wait for me!

YAOUMA. Have I not waited?

SATNI. We had chosen the place to build our home. Do you remember?

YAOUMA. Yes.

SATNI. And dreamed of nights when you should sleep with your head upon my breast — [*Yaouma bends her head*] And now you seek a grave in the slime of the river.

YAOUMA [*with fervor*] The slime of the river is holy, the river is holy. The Nile is nine times holy. It makes grow the pasture that feeds our flocks. It drinks the tears of all our eyes.

SATNI. Listen, Yaouma, I will reveal the truth to

you. The Gods who claim your sacrifice — the Gods are false.

YAOUMA. The Gods are true —

SATNI. They are powerless.

YAOUMA. It is their power that subdues me — it is stronger than love. Until to-day I loved you more than all the living things upon the earth — the breath of your mouth alone gave life to my heart. Even this very day, I dreaded being chosen of the Gods. But now, who has so utterly transformed me if it be not the Gods? You are to me as nothing, now. And I who trembled at a scorpion, who wept at the pricking of a thorn, I am all joy at the thought of dying soon. How could this be if the Gods had not willed it?

SATNI. Hear me a little — and I can prove to you —

YAOUMA. No words can take away the glory of being chosen by the Gods.

SATNI. By the priests.

YAOUMA. 'T is the same, the priests are the voice of the Gods.

SATNI. 'T is they who say so. The Gods of Egypt exist only because men have invented them.

YAOUMA. The peoples from whose lands you come have made you lose your reason. [*With a smile of pity*] Say that our Gods exist not! Think, Satni!

SATNI. Neither the Gods, nor the happy fields, nor the world to come, nor hell.

YAOUMA. Ah! Ah! I will prove you mad — you say there is no hell — But we know, we know that it exists, look there! [*Pointing to the sunset*] When the sun grows red at evening, is it not because the glow of hell is thrown upon it from below? You have but to open your eyes. [*Laughing*] The Gods not exist!

SATNI. They do not. In the sanctuaries of our temples is nothing save beasts, unclean, absurd, and

lifeless images; believe me, Yaouma — I love you — I will not see you die. Your sacrifice is useless. Not because you are offered up will the waters of the Nile rise! Refuse, hide yourself, the waters will still rise. Ah, to lose you for a lie! To lose you — you! How can I convince you? — I know! Yaouma, you saw me cross the dead scarabs on my path. And yet I live! Oh! it angers me to see my words move you not. Your reason, your reason! Awaken your reason —

YAOUMA. I am listening to my heart.

SATNI. I will save you in spite of you — I will keep you by force —

YAOUMA. If you do, I shall hate you —

SATNI. What matter I shall have saved you.

YAOUMA. And I shall kill myself.

SATNI [*seizing her*] Will you not understand! The God-bull, the God-hippopotamus, the God-jackal — they are naught but idols!

YAOUMA. My father worshipped them.

Every one comes back. Rheou, who during all the preceding scene was hidden behind a pillar, goes to meet them.

SOME MEN. Yaouma! Yaouma!

ANOTHER. Up to the terrace!

OTHERS. Up to the terrace! Let her go up to the terrace!

ANOTHER. And let her lift her arms to heaven!

ANOTHER. Let her show that she will give herself to the Nile.

SATNI [*to Yaouma*] Stay! Stay with me! Then together —

YAOUMA [*in ecstasy*] He has chosen me from among all others!

ALL. Yaouma!

SATNI. She has refused! She has refused! And I will take her away.

ALL. No! No! To the terrace! The prayer! The prayer!

RHEOU. Yaouma, go and pray.

SATNI. She has refused!

MIERIS. Choose, Yaouma, between our Gods and a man.

RHEOU. Between the glory of sacrifice —

SATNI. Between falsehood and me, Yaouma —

YAOUMA. The God has called me to save my brothers!

SATNI. You are going to death!

YAOUMA. To life — the real life — the life with the Gods. [*Going to the terrace*].

SATNI. They lie!

YAOUMA. Peace!

SATNI. In spite of you, I will save you. [*Yaouma goes up the stairway leading to the terrace. Satni stands on a bench and shouts to the crowd*] Hear me, my brothers, I know of better Gods, of Gods who ask for no victims —

THE PEOPLE. They are false Gods!

SATNI. They are better Gods —

STEWARD. Rheou! Rheou! bid him cease!

RHEOU. No — let him speak.

SATNI. I come to save you from error, to overthrow the idols, to teach you eternal truths —

An immense shout of acclamation drowns the rest of Satni's words, as Yaouma, who has appeared on the terrace above, stands with her arms raised to the setting sun. Mieris kneels and crosses her hands in prayer.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as Act I.*

Rheou discovered alone. After a few moments the Steward enters through the gates.

RHEOU. What have you seen?

STEWARD. The preparations for the festival continue.

RHEOU. At the Temple?

STEWARD. At the Temple.

RHEOU. For the Feast of Prodigies?

STEWARD. For the Feast of Prodigies.

RHEOU. And the priests believe they can celebrate it to-morrow?

STEWARD. I have seen no reason to doubt of it.

RHEOU. Without Yaouma?

STEWARD. I do not know.

RHEOU. You are mistaken perhaps. Did you go down as far as the Nile?

STEWARD. Yes, master.

RHEOU. Well?

STEWARD. They have finished the decoration of the sacred barge.

RHEOU. I do not understand it.

STEWARD. Nor I, for I know that a certain number of the soldiers have refused to renew the attempt of yesterday —

RHEOU. They have refused?

STEWARD. Yes.

RHEOU. What did they say?

STEWARD. That they were afraid.

RHEOU. Of what — of whom?

STEWARD. Of Satni.

RHEOU. Of Satni?

STEWARD. Yes. They say it was he who caused the miracle of yesterday.

RHEOU. What — what do they say? Their words — tell me?

STEWARD. That it was he —

RHEOU. He, Satni? —

STEWARD. Yes.

RHEOU. Who caused the miracle of yesterday?

STEWARD. Yes.

RHEOU. The miracle that prevented them from carrying out the order of the High Priest?

STEWARD. Yes.

RHEOU. The order to come here and seize Yaouma?

STEWARD. Yes.

RHEOU. So that is what they say?

STEWARD. Every one says it.

RHEOU [*after some reflection*] Come, it is time you learned the truth, that you may repeat it all. In the countries whither he went Satni learned many things — great things. Come hither, lend your ear. He declares there be other gods than the gods of Egypt — and more powerful. If you remember, my father and the Pharaoh Amenotep likewise declared this, and would have made these gods known to us. How they were frustrated you know. It seems — for my own part I know not, 't is Satni says so, ceaselessly, these two months since his return — it seems then, the time is come when these Gods would make them known to us. They have endowed Satni with superhuman power. That I *know*, and none may doubt it now. Satni is resolved to keep his betrothed, and the Lybian Guards were not deceived, it was he who yesterday called down

the thunder and the floods from Heaven upon the soldiers sent here to seize Yaouma.

STEWARD. The oldest remember but one such prodigy.

RHEOU. What I have told you, tell to all; and this, besides, say to them: each time that any would cross the will of Satni — they who dare the attempt will be scattered, even as the guards were scattered yesterday. Add this, that Satni is guided by the spirit of the dead Pharaoh, that I last night beheld my father's spirit, and that great events will come to pass in Egypt.

STEWARD. I shall tell them.

RHEOU. Behold, the envoy of the new gods! Leave me to speak with him. Go, repeat my words.

The Steward goes out.

Satni enters from the back. Rheou prostrates himself before Satni.

SATNI [*looking behind him*] Before which God do you still bow down?

RHEOU. Before you. If you be not a God, you are the spirit of a God.

SATNI. I do not understand your words.

RHEOU. Who can call down thunderbolts from heaven, unless he be an envoy of the Gods?

SATNI. I am no —

RHEOU. 'T is well, 't is well. You would have us blind to your power of working miracles. After yesterday you can hide it no more. Henceforth, Satni, you must no longer confine your teaching to Mieris, to me, to your parents, Yaouma, to a few — henceforth you may speak to all, all ears are opened by this miracle.

SATNI. Let us leave that! I pray you rise and tell me rather what has befallen Yaouma.

RHEOU. Yaouma! — Did she not at first interpret the thunderclap as sign of the wrath of Ammon against her?

SATNI. She believes still in Ammon, then, despite all I have said to her.

RHEOU. Happily I undeceived her. I made her understand that 't was you the elements obeyed, that the thunder that frighted her, was but a sign of your power.

SATNI. Why should you lie to her?

RHEOU. It was not wholly lying. Besides, it was fortunate I could thus explain the event. Had you but seen her —

SATNI. All my efforts of these two months past, in vain!

RHEOU. You remember when you left us yesterday. You might have thought that all her superstitions were banished at last. She no longer answered you, she questioned you no more, and at your last words her silence confirmed the belief that at length you had won her away from Ammon. Yet after you were gone, at the moment of entering her hiding place, she was swept with sudden fury as though an evil spirit had entered her, wept, cried and tore her hair —

SATNI. What said she?

RHEOU. "To the temple! to the temple! I would go to the temple! The God has chosen me! The God awaits me! Egypt will perish!" In short, words of madness. She would have killed herself!

SATNI. Killed herself!

RHEOU. We had to put constraint on her. And 't was only when I led her to this terrace, after the thunderbolt, and pointed out the scattered soldiery, that she came to herself, that at length she perceived that your God was the most powerful. "What," she cried, "'t is he, he, my Satni, who shakes the heavens and the earth for me! For me!" she murmured, "for me!" She would have kissed your sandals, offered you a sacrifice, worshipped, adored you. See where she comes, with Mieris! Stay.

SATNI. No.

He goes. Rheou accompanies him. Mieris enters, bearing flowers and led by Yaouma.

MIERIS [*listening*] Is he there?

YAOUMA. No.

MIERIS. Leave me.

Yaouma goes out. Mieris left alone makes several hesitating steps toward the statue of Isis, then goes up to it and touches it. A pause.

MIERIS. If it be only of wood!

A gesture of disillusion. She draws slowly away from the statue, letting her flowers fall, broken-hearted, and begins to weep. Rheou returns.

RHEOU. Why, Mieris — do you bring flowers to Isis still?

MIERIS. It is the last time. Listen, Rheou — We must ask Satni to heal me. Do not tell me it is not possible; he has healed Ahmarsti.

RHEOU. Healed Ahmarsti?

MIERIS. Yes. He made her drink a liquid wherein no doubt a good genius was hidden, and the evil spirit that tormented her was driven forth.

RHEOU [*credulously*] Is 't possible?

MIERIS. Every one saw it. And Kitoui —

RHEOU. Well?

MIERIS. Kitoui, the cripple, went this morning to draw water from the Nile, before all her neighbors who marvelled and cried with joy. And she had merely touched the hem of his garment, even without his knowing it. He has healed the child of Riti, too, he knows gods more powerful than ours — younger gods, perhaps, our gods are so old — If it were not so, how could he have walked unscathed the road where the scarabs lay, that day when he came home? Since then, men have seen him do a thousand forbidden things, have seen him defy our gods by disrespect. Without the protection

of a higher power, how could he escape the chastisement whereof another had died? Who are his gods? Rheou, he must make them known to you.

RHEOU. He refuses.

MIERIS. For what reason?

RHEOU. The reason he gives is absurd — he says there are no gods —

MIERIS. No gods! no gods! — he is mocking you.

RHEOU. He is bound to secrecy, perhaps.

MIERIS. Rheou, know you that this Ahmarsti — these two years now, on the day of Prodigies, have I heard her at my side howling prayers at the goddess that were never answered.

RHEOU. I know. Satni declares he could have healed all whom the goddess has relieved.

MIERIS [*to herself*] He relieves even those women whom she abandons — [*After a pause*] He must teach you the words that work these miracles.

RHEOU. He refuses.

MIERIS. Force him!

RHEOU. He says there are none.

MIERIS. Threaten him with death — he will speak.

RHEOU. No.

MIERIS [*with excitement*] But you do not understand me! — he has healed Ahmarsti, he has healed Kitoui, wherefore should he not heal me?

RHEOU [*sadly*] Ah! Mieris, Mieris, think you I waited for your prayer, to ask him that?

MIERIS. Well — Well —?

RHEOU. I could gain nothing but these words from him: "Could I overcome the evil Mieris suffers from, even now should she rejoice in the splendor of day."

MIERIS. Nothing is impossible to the gods, even to ours; how much more then to his! — He did not yield to your prayers! — Insist, order, threaten! Force him

to speak. You have the right to command him. He is but the son of a potter after all. Let him be whipped till he yield. Do anything, have him whipped to the point of death — or better, offer him fields, the hill of date-trees that is ours; offer him our flocks, and my jewels and precious stones — tell him we know him for a living god — but I would be healed. I would be healed! I would see! See! [*With anger*] Ah! you know not the worth of the light, you whose eyes are filled with it! You cannot picture my misery, you who suffer it not! You grieve for me, I doubt not, but you think you have done enough, having given me pity! — No, no, I am wrong — I am unjust. But forgive me; this thought that I might be healed has made me mad. Rheou! — Think, Rheou, what it means to be blind, to have been so always, and to know that beside one are those who see — who see! — The humblest of our shepherds, the most wretched of the women at our looms, I envy them. And when, at times, I hear them complain, I curb myself lest I should strike them, wretches that know not their good fortune. I feel that all you, you who see, should never cease from songs of joy, and hymns of thanksgiving to the gods — [*With an outburst*] I speak of sight! Think, Rheou, I have not even a clear idea of what it means "to see." To recognize without touch, to know without need to listen. To perceive the sun another way than by the heat of its rays! — They say the flowers are so beautiful! — I would see *you*, my well-beloved. Oh! the day when I shall see your eyes! — I would see, that you may show me some likeness of the little child we lost. You shall point out, among the rest, those that are most like to him. This misery — O my beloved! — I do not often speak of it — but I suffer it! I suffer it! [*She is in his arms*] They have taken from me the hope that our gods will heal me, if they give me nothing in its place,

know you what I shall do? — I shall go away, alone, one night, touching the walls, and the trees — and the trees, with my arms outstretched; I shall go down as far as the Nile and there, gently, I shall glide away to death.

RHEOU. Peace, O my best beloved!

MIERIS [*listening*] I hear him — he comes. I leave you with him! Lead him to my door — love me — save me!

She attempts to go out, he leads her. Satni enters followed by Nourm, Sokiti, and Bitiou.

NOURM. Yes! Thou who art mighty! — Yes! Yes! Make me rich — I have had blows of the stick so long! I would be rich to be able to give them in my turn! — You have but to speak the magic words.

SATNI [*somewhat brutally*] Leave me! I am no magician.

SOKITI. I, I do not ask for money. Listen not to him; he is bad. I, I only ask that you make Khames die; he has taken from me the girl I would have wed. [*Satni pushes him away. Sokiti, weeping, clings to his garments*] Grant it, I implore you — I implore you! — My life is gone with her — make him die, I pray you.

SATNI. Leave me!

SOKITI. Hear me.

BITIOU [*coming between them and striking Sokiti*] Begone! Begone! He would not hear you! [*Sokiti goes out*] Listen — listen — you see I made him go. All — all whom you will, I shall beat them for you. Listen — if you could make me tall like you, and steady on my legs — See — here — I have hidden away, safe, three gold rings, that I stole a while since; I will give them you.

SATNI. Go, take them to the high priest —

BITIOU [*pitiably*] I have given four to him already.

Sokiti and Nourm are conferring together. Enter

Rheou. They run away, Bitiou follows, falling and picking himself up.

RHEOU. What do they want of you?

SATNI. They came here, following me. They believe me gifted with supernatural power, and crave miracles of me, as though I were a God, or a juggler. I am neither, and I work no miracles.

RHEOU. None the less you have worked two miracles.

SATNI. Not one.

RHEOU. And you will work yet one more.

SATNI. Never. I came hither not to perform miracles, but to prevent them.

RHEOU. You will heal Mieris.

SATNI. No one can heal her, nor I, nor any other.

RHEOU. Give her a little hope.

SATNI. How can I?

RHEOU. Tell her you will invoke your God, and that some day perhaps —

SATNI. I have no God. If there be a god, he is so great, so far from us, so utterly beyond our comprehension, that for us it is as though he did not exist. To believe that one of our actions, to believe that a prayer could act upon the will of God, is to belittle him, to deny him. He is himself incapable of a miracle; it would be to belie himself. Could he improve his work, he would not then have created it perfect from the first. He could not do it.

RHEOU. Our ancient gods at least permitted hope.

SATNI. Keep them.

RHEOU. In the heart of Mieris, you have destroyed them.

SATNI. Do you regret it?

RHEOU. Not yet.

SATNI. What would you say?

RHEOU. Even if it be true that sight will never be

given her, do not tell her so. Far better promise that she will be healed.

SATNI. And to all the others, must I promise healing too? Because in a house I relieved a child, whose illness sprang from a cause I could remove; because a woman, ill in imagination, did cure herself by touching my garment's hem; must I then descend to play the part of sorcerer? I had behind me there, but now, a rabble of the wretched imploring me, believing me all powerful, begging for them and theirs unrealizable miracles. Should I then cheat them too, all those poor wretches, promising what I know I cannot give? I came hither to make an end of lies, not to replace them with others.

RHEOU [*with passion*] Ah! You would not lie. You would not lie to the wretched. You would not lie to Mieris. You would lie to no one, is it so?

SATNI. To no one.

RHEOU. We shall see! [*Calling right*] Yaouma! — Let them send Yaouma! [*To Satni*] Not to her either, then? Good; if you speak the truth to her, if you deny that you have supernatural power, if you force her to believe you had no hand in the miracle that saved her yesterday, she will give herself to the priests, or she will kill herself! What will you do?

Yaouma enters, she tries to prostrate herself before Satni, who prevents her. In the meantime the Steward greatly moved has come to whisper to Rheou.

RHEOU [*deeply moved*] He is there!

STEWARD. In person.

RHEOU. 'T is an order of the Pharaoh then?

STEWARD. Yes.

RHEOU. I am troubled.

He goes out with the Steward.

SATNI [*to Yaouma*] What is it ails you? Why are you so sad?

YAOUMA. You will want nothing more of me, now that you are a god.

SATNI. Be not afraid: I am not a god.

YAOUMA. Almost. 'T is a daughter of the Pharaoh you will marry now.

SATNI. I will marry you.

YAOUMA. You will swear to.

SATNI. Yes.

YAOUMA. By Ammon? — [*Recollecting*] By your god?

SATNI. My god is not concerned with us.

YAOUMA. Who then is concerned with us?

SATNI. No one.

YAOUMA. You do not want to tell me. You treat me as a child — mocking me.

SATNI. Why do you need an oath? I love you, and you shall be my wife.

YAOUMA [*radiant*] I shall be your wife! — I, little Yaouma, I shall be wife to a man whom the heavens obey! — [*A pause*] When I think that you loosed the thunder for my sake —

SATNI. No, vain child, I did not loose the thunder.

YAOUMA. Yes, yes, yes — I understand. You want no one to know that you have found the book of Thoth — fear not, I know how to hold my peace. [*Coaxingly she puts her arms round Satni's neck and rubs her cheek against his*] Tell me, how did you find it?

SATNI. I have not found the book of magic spells; besides, it would have profited me nothing.

YAOUMA. Sit — you would not sit? They say 't is shut up in three caskets, hidden at the bottom of the sea.

SATNI. I tell you again I neither sought, nor found it.

YAOUMA. What do you do then, to strike fire from heaven?

SATNI. I did not strike fire from heaven.

YAOUMA [*crossly*] Oh! I do not love you now! — Yes, yes, yes, I love you! [*A pause*] So it pleased you then, when you were going away in the galley, to see me run barefoot on the bank —?

SATNI. Yes.

YAOUMA [*angry*] But speak! speak! [*Checking herself, then more coaxing still*] You wanted to weep? No? You said you did. For my part I know not, then, I could see nothing. But the day of your return, when you learned I was chosen for the sacrifice, then, then I saw your eyes — You love me — You said to me you would prevent me going to the Nile. I believed you not — you remember — Why! even yesterday, yes, yesterday again, in spite of all your words, I was resolved to escape and go to the temple. It needed this proof of your power! — tell me, it was you who shook the heavens and the earth for me.

SATNI. No.

YAOUMA. Again! — You must think but little of me, to believe I should reveal what you bade me keep secret. [*She lays her hands on Satni's cheeks*] It *was* you, was it not?

SATNI. No, no, no! a thousand times no!

YAOUMA. It was your gods then, your gods whom I know not.

SATNI. No.

YAOUMA. Who was it then?

SATNI. No one.

YAOUMA [*out of countenance*] No one! [*A pause*] You possess no power that other men have not?

SATNI. No.

YAOUMA [*the same*] You seem as one speaking truth.

SATNI. I speak the truth.

YAOUMA. 'T is a pity!

SATNI. Why?

YAOUMA. It would have been more beautiful. [*A long grave pause*] To go in the barge, on the Nile, that too had been more beautiful.

Rheou and the Steward enter

RHEOU [*agitated*] Go in, Yaouma. [*To the Steward*] Conduct her to her mistress — and make known to her what has passed. [*Yaouma and the Steward go out*] Satni, terrible news has come to me: the Pharaoh, finding the people's enmity increase against him, has taken fright, and striking first, the blow has fallen on me. My goods are confiscated. I am sent to exile. The palace Chamberlain, but now, brought me the order to quit my house to-day, and deliver myself to the army leaving for Ethiopia.

SATNI. Can you do nothing against this order?

RHEOU. Yes. I can kill those who gave it.

SATNI. Kill!

RHEOU. Listen. I bring you the means to win the triumph of your ideas, and at the same time serve my cause. I can arm all the dwellers on my lands. We two must lead them. They will follow you, knowing you all powerful. Nay, hear me — wait. The soldiers, who fear you, will not dare resist us, we shall kill the high priest, the Pharaoh if need be — we shall be masters of Egypt.

SATNI. I would not kill.

RHEOU. So be it. Enough that you declare yourself ready to repeat the miracle of yesterday.

SATNI. I would not lie.

RHEOU. If you would neither kill nor lie, you will never succeed in governing men.

SATNI. I would fight the priests of Ammon, not imitate them.

RHEOU. You will never triumph without doing so. Profit by events. Do not deny the power they believe to be yours. Men will not follow you, if you speak only

to their reason. You are above the crowd by your learning; that gives you rights. You would lead them to the summits; to get there, one must blindfold those who suffer from dizziness.

SATNI. I refuse.

RHEOU. One would think you were afraid of victory!

SATNI. Rheou, 't is not the victory of my ideas you seek, 't is your own vengeance, your own ambition.

RHEOU. They wish to rush the people of Egypt into an unjust and useless war. They hesitate; they feel the people lacking zest, that is why they have delayed the going of the army till the feast of Prodigies. Tomorrow they will make the goddess speak, and all those poor creatures will be led away. You can save thousands of lives by sacrificing a few.

SATNI. I refuse. The truth will prevail without help from cruelty or falsehood.

RHEOU. Never. The crowd is not a woman to be won by loud wooing, but one who must be taken by force, whom you must dominate before you can persuade.

SATNI. Say no more, Rheou, I refuse.

RHEOU. Blind! Fool! Coward!

Mieris enters, led by Yaouma. A moment later some men — Bitiou, Sokiti, Nourm.

MIERIS. Rheou! — where are you? where are you? [*Yaouma leads her toward him*] It is true, this that I hear? — Exile — Misery?

RHEOU. It is true.

MIERIS. Courage — As for me, a palace or a cottage — I know not the one from the other.

RHEOU [*to Satni*] Satni, can you still refuse?

SATNI. You torture me! No, I will not be credited with power that is not mine; to stir men up against their fellows — I would not kill, I tell you.

MIERIS. I understand you, Satni — it is wrong to kill! — But look once more upon me — I am poor

now, I am going away, will you not consent to heal me?

SATNI [*anguished*] Mieris — Could I have healed you, would it not be done already?

MIERIS. You can do it! I know you can do it! Work a miracle.

YAOUMA. A miracle! Show that your god is more powerful than our gods.

A MAN [*who has just entered*] Heal us!

SATNI. I am not able.

ANOTHER. Work a miracle.

SATNI. There are no miracles!

A MAN. Then your gods are less mighty than ours.

SATNI. Yours do not exist.

THE PEOPLE [*terrified at the blasphemy*] Oh!

A MAN. Why do you lead us away from our gods, if you have no others to give us?

ANOTHER. You shall not insult our gods!

ANOTHER. We will hand you over to the priests lest the gods smite us for hearing you!

ANOTHER. Ammon will chastise us!

SATNI. No.

A MAN. Isis will abandon us!

SATNI. It will not make you more wretched.

ANOTHER. Then show us you are stronger than our gods.

MIERIS. A miracle!

RHEOU. He is stronger than our gods!
YAOUMA. A miracle or I die! } [*Together*]

SATNI. You demand it! You demand a miracle. Well, then, you shall have one, I will do this, but in the presence of all! Go! go! go throughout the domains — bring hither those you find bowed on the earth, or hung to poles for drawing water. Go you others, summon the slaves, the piteous workers — call hither

the drawers of stones, bid them drop the ropes that flay their shoulders, bid them come.

MIERIS. What would you do?

SATNI. Convince them.

MIERIS. Now of a sudden, brutally?

SATNI. Brutally.

RHEOU. Do you believe them ready?

SATNI. You are afraid.

RHEOU. Day comes not suddenly on night, between them is the dawn.

Delethi leads Mieris right under the peristyle.

SATNI. I would have day, broad daylight — Now, at once, for all! 'T is a crime to *promise* them reward for their suffering. How do we know that they will ever be paid?

RHEOU. They are so miserable —

SATNI. The truth — is the truth good only for the rich? Will you add that injustice to all the others? Behold them! [*Gradually the slaves and workers of all kinds have entered till they fill the stage. Amongst them Pakh, Sokiti, Bitiou the Dwarf*] Yes, behold them, the victims, behold the wretched! I know you all. You, you are shepherd, you are worse nourished than your flocks, and your beasts, at least, are not given blows. They do not beat the cows nor the sheep. You, you sow and you reap; beneath the sun, tortured by flies, you gather abundant crops. You sleep in a hole. Others eat the corn you made grow, and sleep on precious stuffs. You, you are forever drawing water from the Nile; betwixt you and the ox they harness to another machine, there is no difference, and yet you are a man. You, you are one of those who drag great stones, to build the monuments of pride. You are a digger in the tombs, you live a month or more without sight of day. To glorify the death of others, you give your life. You are a trainer of lions for war; your father was eaten —

they would have wept had the lion died — How can it be that you accept all this, when you see beside you happiness without work, and abundance without effort? I will tell you. 'T is because, in the name of the god Ammon-Ra, they have said to you: "Have patience, this injustice will last but a life-time." Fools! nothing but that! All the time you are on earth, suffer, produce for others. Content ye with hunger, you who produce food. Content ye with worse usage than the swine, you who have guard of them. Content ye to sleep in the open, you who build palaces and temples. Content ye with all miseries, you carvers of gold, and setters of precious stones. Look without envy, without anger, on the welfare of those who do nothing, all this will last only the whole of your lives! After, in another world, you shall have the fulness of all the crops, and the joy of all the pleasures. Well, they lied to you: there is no island of souls, there are no happy fields, there is no life of atonement after this. [*Loud murmurs*] They have set up these gods for your servile adoration; they have counselled you: "Bow down, these gods will avenge you." They have said: "Prostrate yourselves, these gods are just." They have said: "Throw yourselves to earth, these gods are good." They have declared them all powerful; shut them in sanctuaries of awful gloom, whence you are shown them once a year, to keep alive your terror of the Gods; and last, they have made you believe no man may touch these images and live. I tell you they lied — I will show you they lied to you. Behold the most mighty Ammon — the father of the gods — I spit my hate at him! Thou art but an idol; I curse thee for evil men have done in thy name! I curse thee in the name of all the enslaved, in the name of all those they have cheated with hopes of an avenging life; in the name of all who for thousands of years have groaned and wept; suffered insult, outrage, blows, death, with-

out thought of revolt, because promises made in thy name had soothed their rage to sleep! And I curse thee for the sorrow that now fills me, and for the ills that must come even of thy going! Die! [*He throws a stool in the face of the statue*] You others do as I. Go, climb their pedestals! Lay hold of their hands, they are lifeless! Strike, 't is but an image! Spit in their faces, they are senseless! Strike! Ruin! All this is nothing but hardened mud!

The crowd which had punctuated the words of Satni with cries and murmurs has approached the statues behind him and followed his example, blaspheming, and howling with fury. The more courageous begin, being hoisted to the pedestals, the rest follow suit. The gods are overthrown.

RHEOU. Now, let them open my granaries, that each may help himself; and take from my flocks to sate you all.

Cries of joy, they go out slowly. Bitiou in the meantime approaches an overthrown statue and still half-afraid, kicks it. He tries to run, falls, picks himself up, then seeing that decidedly there is no danger, seats himself on the stomach of the goddess Thoueris and bursts into a peal of triumphant bestial laughter.

BITIOU. Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah!

Then he perceives the little statue of Isis which Mieris shields with her arms, points it out to a couple of men who advance to it.

DELETHI. Mistress, they would take Isis!

MIERIS [*in tears*] Let me keep her —

RHEOU. No, Mieris.

MIERIS [*letting go*] Take her — [*Then*] Stay!

RHEOU. Wherefore?

MIERIS. Can you part from her, and feel nothing? Even now, Satni, in denouncing the gods to the fury of the crowd, you did not say everything — You, who

can see her, behold this little image, think how many tears were shed before her, in the years since she was made. She has been ours for generations. Call up the countless crowds of those who have fixed their anxious looks upon her eyes, dead even as mine are. It is for all the anguish she has looked upon, we must respect her. Tears make holy. I doubt not you are right: she must be broken too — but not without farewell. [*To Yaouma*] Where is she, Yaouma? I would say my last prayer to her. [*To the statue*] Oh, thou who didst not heal, but didst console me; O thou who hast heard so many entreaties and thanksgivings, thou art but clay! Yet men have given thee life; thy life was not in thee, it was in them — and the proof is that thou diest, now they have taken their soul from thee. I give thee over to those who would break thee, but I revere thee, I salute thee, and I thank thee for all the hope thou hast given me; and I thank thee in the name of all the sorrows that thou hast sent to sleep. [*To the men*] Take her hence — let them destroy her with respect.

They take Isis away.

SATNI. There is nothing so sad or so great as the death of a god! [*A pause. To Yaouma, who comes through the crowd*] Behold, Yaouma! The gods are dead and I live — behold them! Do you believe me — do you believe me?

Sadly Yaouma looks at the broken statues, then bursts into tears before Satni, who stands amazed.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: — *The yard in front of the potter's hut. On the right from the middle of the back of the scene to the footlights, the walls of the dwelling made of beaten clay. Two unequal doors. The wall is slightly raised supporting a terrace where pottery of all kinds is drying in the sun. Left, a wall of loose stones high enough to lean on. Between the wall and the house an opening leading to an invisible inclined plane that descends to the Nile, the water and opposite bank of which are visible. Behind the house and on the right groups of lofty palms. The whole is abject misery beneath the splendor of a heaven blazing with light.*

Kirjipa, crouching down, is grinding corn between a large and a small stone. Satni is seated on the wall dreaming.

KIRJIPA. Son.

SATNI. Mother.

KIRJIPA. And so you do not believe that when the moon grows little by little less, 't is because it is eaten by a pig?

SATNI. No, mother.

KIRJIPA. Then what beast eats it?

SATNI. None.

KIRJIPA [*laughing*] You have ideas that are not reasonable. What makes me marvel, is that your father seems to understand them. I must haste to make the bread, that he find it when he returns.

SATNI. Here comes the messenger from Rheou.

KIRJIPA [*horrified*] The messenger of him who kills the gods.

SATNI. We do not kill what has no life.

KIRJIPA. I would not see him. [*She picks up her corn*].

SATNI. Why?

KIRJIPA. Brrr! — [*To herself*] To-morrow I shall burn some sacred herbs here. [*She goes out*].

The Steward enters.

STEWARD. Satni, I have been seeking you. Since this morning unhappy things have come to pass —

SATNI. Yaouma is not in danger, or Mieris, or Rheou?

STEWARD. No. All three are safe in the palace.

SATNI. Well?

STEWARD. You remember the order the master gave me this morning, after the death of the gods?

SATNI. No.

STEWARD. Yes, to open his granaries to all.

SATNI. Yes, yes, well?

STEWARD. When I went to obey, to my amazement I beheld the men stand by the door in earnest converse, then without entering they withdrew. This is what happened. They went to the house of the neighboring master, roused his servants and laborers, and strove to force them to overthrow the statues of his gods, and rob him of his corn. They killed his steward. Soldiers came — Nepk had been killed, others too. Then all were scattered. The master sent me to bid you reason with those whom you might find. Look! there are some who have taken refuge here! [*To some men who are outside*] Enter — come — Satni would speak with you!

Bitiou, Sokiti, and Nourm appear behind the wall. Bitiou comes in.

SATNI [*To Bitiou*] Whither go you?

STEWARD. Whither go you? Whence come you?

BITIOU. I followed the others —

STEWARD. Whence come you?

BITIOU. I came back with the others, Sokiti and Nourm.

SATNI. Where are they?

BITIOU. There.

STEWARD. Bid them enter.

SATNI [*going to the door*] Sokiti, Nourm, come.

Sokiti and Nourm enter awkwardly.

STEWARD. Why do you hide yourselves?

NOURM. We do not hide from you, but from the Lybian soldiers.

SATNI. Why do you fear them?

SOKITI. Because they are chasing us.

STEWARD. And why are they chasing you?

The three men look at each other.

SATNI. Bitiou, answer.

BITIOU. Bitiou knows not.

STEWARD [*to the others*] You know it, you.

NOURM. They took us for the others.

SATNI. What others?

NOURM. Perhaps they took us for the servants of the neighboring master.

STEWARD. They have done mischief, then, the servants of the neighboring master? [*Pause*] Answer — you!

NOURM [*to Satni*] They did that at his house, that you made us do at yours.

STEWARD. The priests heard of it?

NOURM. No, but the master sent for the soldiers.

SATNI. Only for that!

NOURM. I know not.

SATNI. Had there been nothing else, he would not have sent for the Lybian soldiers. He knew our projects — he is with us. There is something else, eh! —

Bitiou yawns loudly.

SOKITI. Yes.

SATNI. What?

SOKITI [*to Nourm*] Tell.

NOURM. They were angered with the master. He was bad, the master.

STEWARD. He is hard, but he gives much to those who have nothing.

SOKITI. He gave here, that he might receive hereafter.

NOURM. After his death.

SATNI. And now he gives no more?

NOURM. Nothing.

SATNI. Ah!

BITIOU. Nothing — and so, all stomachs empty, very much. [*He laughs*].

NOURM. He gives only blows of the stick now.

SOKITI [*with conviction*] One cannot live on that alone.

NOURM. And so his servants asked him for corn?

BITIOU. No good — only blows of the stick.

STEWARD. They *took* the corn that was refused them?

BITIOU [*laughing*] Hunger! [*A gesture*].

SATNI. You knew they were going to do that?

SOKITI. Yes.

SATNI. It was for that you went to join them?

NOURM. Yes.

STEWARD. Why?

NOURM. It came into our heads like this: better not take corn from the good master, but take it from the bad one.

SOKITI. Justice!

BITIOU [*to the Steward*] You content. You still got all your corn.

He laughs, his comrades laugh with him.

NOURM. You, we like you.

BITIOU. You — good! We — good!

SOKITI. See!

BITIOU [*collecting two ideas*] Wait: neighboring master bad. They bad. [*To the others*] Heh? — Heh? — you see — Heh? Heh? [*All three draw themselves up proudly and laugh*] And the steward he bad, he dead — well done!

SATNI. What would he say?

SOKITI [*laughing*] They took the steward and then — [*Chokes with laughter*].

NOURM. They gave him back all the blows of the stick they had had from him.

SATNI. You saw that?

NOURM. Yes.

SOKITI [*proudly*] Me too, me too —

BITIOU. I laugh very much — because — because — Steward, very big, strong, and then when very much beaten, fell down — fell on the ground — like me! like me! He, big, he fell down just the same — he like Bitiou — I very glad. [*During what follows he plays with his foot*].

STEWARD. What they have done is bad.

NOURM. No. The steward had been happy all his life. He was old.

SOKITI. He was old. So 't is not bad to have killed him — He had finished — He was fat — and he had lost his appetite —

NOURM. Only just, he should leave his place to another.

SATNI. We must not kill.

SOKITI. What does that mean?

NOURM. Yes, kill a good one, that is bad. But kill a bad one, that is good.

SATNI. And if you are mistaken?

SOKITI. No, he is bad, I kill him.

SATNI. What if he be not bad, and you think him so?

SOKITI. If he were not bad, I should not think it.

STEWARD. You do not understand — Listen, I am not bad, am I?

SOKITI. But we do not want to kill you.

STEWARD. Let me speak. You remember Kob the black. He thought me bad.

NOURM. Yes.

STEWARD. And if he had killed me?

SOKITI. We are not blacks —

STEWARD. You do not understand me. Consider. He thought me bad. I am not bad. What you were saying, would justify him if he had killed me.

They consider.

SOKITI. I understand. You say: If the slave had killed me — no, it is not that.

SATNI. Human life must be respected.

Gravely they make sign of acquiescence, to escape further torment. Nourm picks up a package he had brought and turns to go out unobserved.

STEWARD. What are you carrying there?

NOURM. Nothing, 't is mine —

BITIOU. That is a necklace — show. [*Begins to open the package*].

NOURM. Yes, a necklace.

SATNI. From whom did you take it?

NOURM. From the neighboring master.

SATNI. Do you think you did well?

NOURM [*hesitating*] Why — yes.

SATNI. You are wrong.

NOURM. Be not afraid, no one saw me.

SATNI. It is wrong.

NOURM. No. What can wrong me, is wrong. Since no one saw me, they will not punish me. So it is not wrong.

SATNI. Wrong not to you, but to the neighboring master.

NOURM. He has many others.

SOKITI. Has had them for years, he has! Nourm never had one. Not just. I, I never had, this — [*He holds up a bracelet*].

SATNI. You have taken this bracelet!

SOKITI [*delighted*] It is mine.

SATNI. We are content.

They laugh.

NOURM. And Bitiou —

SATNI AND SOKITI. Yes, Bitiou —

NOURM. He took the best thing.

STEWARD. What?

BITIOU. A woman.

STEWARD. By force?

BITIOU. No woman would come willingly with Bitiou.

SOKITI. But she escaped from him.

BITIOU. Yes. [*He weeps*].

SATNI. You must give back the necklace and this bracelet to the neighboring master.

NOURM. Give back, but he has others!

SATNI. You cannot make yourself the judge of that. If you were selling perfumes, for instance, would you think it natural that a man should come and take them from you, because you had plenty and he had none?

NOURM. You tell me hard things.

SATNI. You must give back this bracelet, Sokiti.

SOKITI. Yes, master.

SATNI. And you the necklace.

NOURM. Yes, master.

A sorrowful pause.

SATNI. See, you are sad. You perceive that you did wrong.

SOKITI. Yes, we did wrong —

SATNI. Ah!

SOKITI. We did wrong to tell you what we did, because you are not pleased.

SATNI. 'T is for your sake I am grieved.

NOURM. Then you have not told the truth; there is a hell, and there is an island of souls.

SATNI. No.

NOURM. If the gods do not punish, and men, not having seen, do not punish either — [*Pause*] Well — I shall give it back.

SOKITI. I, I shall not give back. Not stolen. Another, a servant of the neighboring master stole the bracelet, not I!

STEWARD. Yet 't is you who have it.

SOKITI. I took it from the other.

STEWARD. He let you do it?

SOKITI. Yes. Could not help it, he was wounded.

SATNI. You should have succored him.

SOKITI. I did not know him.

SATNI. He was a man like you.

SOKITI. There are plenty of them.

SATNI. We must do good to others.

SOKITI. What good will that do to me?

SATNI. You will be content with yourself.

SOKITI. I would rather have the bracelet —

SATNI. It is only by refraining from doing one another harm that mankind may hope to gain happiness; nay more, only by lending one another aid. Do you understand?

SOKITI [*gloomily*] Yes.

SATNI. And you, and you —

NOURM AND BITIOU [*in different tones*] Yes, yes.

STEWARD [*to Sokiti*] Repeat it then.

SOKITI. If men did not steal bracelets —

STEWARD. Well?

SOKITI. Bracelets — [*He laughs*].

SATNI [*to Nourm*] And you?

NOURM. He was wrong to take the bracelet.

SATNI. Why?

NOURM. Because you are not pleased.

SATNI. No, no, 't is not for that.

SOKITI. I was not wrong —

NOURM. Yes! wait! I understand — If you steal, another may steal from you. Likewise if you kill —

SATNI. Right. And why is it necessary to be good?

NOURM. Wait [*To Sokiti*] If you do good to one whom you know not, another who knows you not, may do good to you.

STEWARD. Ah! — Do you understand, Sokiti?

SOKITI. I think so.

SATNI. Explain.

SOKITI [*after a great effort*] You do not want us to steal bracelets from you —

SATNI. I do not want you to steal from any one — Do you understand?

SOKITI. No.

STEWARD [*to Bitiou, who listens open-mouthed*] And you?

BITIOU. I — I have a pain in my head —

Satni comes to the Steward. Bitiou and Sokiti slip off.

STEWARD. Look at them —

SATNI. The tree that was bent from its birth, not in one day can you make it straight?

STEWARD. We must leave it what it is, or tear it down?

SATNI. No, we must seek patiently to straighten it. [*With feeling*] And above all we must keep straight those that are young.

Cries are heard outside.

STEWARD. What cries are those?

SATNI. Women in distress.

Yaouma enters, leading Mieris. Both are agitated.

YAOUMA. Come, mistress — come — We are at the house of the potter, the father of Satni — Satni help — quick! quick! Run! your father, Satni!

SATNI. Mieris, Yaouma, how come you here?

YAOUMA. They will tell you — go!

MIERIS. Fly to the rescue, he is wounded! — I have sent to the palace for those who drive out the evil spirits.

YAOUMA. We were set upon by some men.

MIERIS. He defended us — But they will kill him — go!

Satni and the Steward seize some arms left by Nourm and run out.

MIERIS. Yaouma! He is wounded! Wounded in saving us —

YAOUMA. Alas!

MIERIS [*listening*] Who is there?

NOURM. I, mistress.

MIERIS. Nourm! Run to the palace, bid them send hither those who drive forth the evil spirits —

YAOUMA. Alas! mistress, I do fear — already he has fallen — struck to earth.

MIERIS. They will save him, they will bear him hither —

YAOUMA. Will they bear him hither alive?

MIERIS [*to Nourm*] Run! — You hear! — Run to the palace, bid those who assist at the last hour be ready to come. If he have died defending us, the same honors shall be paid him as though ourselves were dead! Go! [*Nourm goes out. A pause*] Now, Yaouma, lead me out upon the road to the Nile.

YAOUMA. Mistress, you seek to die? Many then must be your sorrows!

MIERIS. Alas! Alas! Why did you discover my flight? Why did you seek me, find me, and bring me back —

YAOUMA. Had I not guessed your purpose?

MIERIS. What have I left to live for?

YAOUMA. You have lived all these years in spite of your affliction, what is there that is changed?

MIERIS. What is there that is changed! You ask me what is changed! Until now I lived in the hope of a miracle.

YAOUMA. Perhaps it would never have come.

MIERIS. Even at my last hour I should have still looked for it.

YAOUMA. Then you would have died believing in a lie — if what they say be true.

MIERIS. What matter, I had smiled as I died, thinking death but the journey to a land where my lost child was waiting for me. The death of a child! No mother ever can believe, at heart, in that. It is too unjust — too cruel to be possible. One says to oneself: it is but a separation! Oh! Satni, thy doctrines may be the truth. But they declare this separation eternal; they make the death of our loved ones final, irreparable, horrible, therefore I foretell thee this: Women will never believe them! What is there that is changed? — Yesterday, children came playing close to us. You know how their cries and laughter made me glad — the voice of one of them was like the voice of mine. I made him come, I put out my hand, in the old way. I felt, at the old height, tossed hair, and the warmth of a living body. And I did not weep, but my voice spoke in my heart and said: "Little child, thy years are as many as his, whom she-who-loves-the-silence took from me. But in Amenti, where he is, in the island of souls, he is happier than thou, for he is safe from all the ills that threaten thee. He is happier than thou. He lives beneath a sun of gold, amid flowers of strange beauty, and perfumed baths refresh him. And when she-who-loves-the-silence takes me in my turn, *I shall see him, I shall see him* for

the first time — and I shall fondle him as I fondle thee, and none, then, may put us asunder. Go, little child, the happy ones are not on this side of the earth! Now have I lost the hope of a better life before death, and the hope of a better life beyond as well. If you took both crutches from a cripple, he would fall. Only this twofold hope sustained me. They have taken it from me. And so, it is the end, it is the end — 't is as though I were fallen from a height, I am broken, I have no strength left to bear with life: I tell you, it is the end, it is the end!

YAOUMA [*with intense fervor*] Mistress, they speak not the truth!

MIERIS. Our gods, did they exist, would already have taken vengeance.

YAOUMA. Before the outrage, already, they had taken vengeance on you.

MIERIS. Good Yaouma, you would give me back my faith, you who could not keep your own.

YAOUMA. Mistress, I lied to you; nothing is destroyed in me.

MIERIS. You refuse to give yourself in sacrifice! — Oh, you are right . . .

YAOUMA. I do not refuse.

MIERIS. You do not!

YAOUMA. No. Know you how I learned, a while ago, that you were gone?

MIERIS. How?

YAOUMA. I, too, was seeking to escape.

MIERIS. You?

YAOUMA. To go to the temple, to place myself in hands of the priests, to give to Ammon the victim he has chosen.

MIERIS. Do you believe in all these fables still?

YAOUMA [*in a low voice*] Mistress, I have *seen* Isis.

MIERIS. Has one of her images been spared then?

YAOUMA. It was not an image that I saw. It was Isis herself, the goddess — I have *seen* her.

MIERIS. You — you have seen — what is it? I know not what you say — to see — that word has no clear sense for me.

YAOUMA. She has spoken to me —

MIERIS. You have heard her voice —

YAOUMA. I have heard her voice.

MIERIS. How! How! — You were sleeping — 't was in a dream —

YAOUMA. I did not sleep. I did not dream. I saw her. I heard her. I was alone, and I wept. A great sound filled me with terror. A great light blinded me. Perfumes unknown ravished my senses. And I beheld the goddess, more beauteous than a queen. Then all was gone —

MIERIS. But her voice —

YAOUMA. The next day she came again, she spoke to me, she called me by name and said to me: "Egypt will be saved by thee."

MIERIS. Why did you not speak of it?

YAOUMA. I feared they would not believe me.

MIERIS. Oh, Yaouma, how I envy you! If you but knew the ill they have done me. They have half killed me, killing all the legends and all the memories that were mine. They made me blush at my simplicity. I felt shamed to have been so easily fooled by such gross make-believes. And now, what have I gained by this revelation? My soul is a house after the burning, black, ruined, empty. Nothing is left but ruins, ruins one might laugh at. [*In tears*] I am parched with thirst, I hunger, I tremble with cold. They have made my soul blind, too. I cry out for help, for consolation. Oh! for a lie, some other lie, to replace the one they have taken away from me!

YAOUMA. Why ask a lie? Why not forget what they

have said. Why not recall what you learned at your mother's knee — Why not, yourself, set up in your heart again, those images which they threw down —

MIERIS. Yes! Yes! I will do it. They have awakened my reason, and killed my faith. I shall kill my reason, to revive our gods. Though I no longer believe, I shall do the actions of believers — and, if my god be false, I shall believe so firmly in him that I shall make him true! — Yes, the lowest, the most senseless superstitions, I venerate them, I exalt — I glory in them! The ugliest, the most deformed, the most unreal of our gods, I adore them, and I bow down before their impossibility. [*She kneels*] Oh, I stifle in their petty narrow world, sad as a forest without birds! Air! Air! Singing! The sound of wings! Things that fly!

YAOUMA [*kneeling*] Let me be sacrificed!

MIERIS. Let me have a reason for living!

YAOUMA. I would give my life to the gods who gave me birth!

MIERIS. I would believe that there is some one above men!

YAOUMA. Some one who watches over us!

MIERIS. Who will console us with his justice!

YAOUMA. Some one to cry our sorrows to!

MIERIS. Yes, some one to pray to, and to thank!

YAOUMA [*sobbing*] Oh! the pity of it, to feel we were abandoned!

MIERIS [*throwing herself in Yaouma's arms*] I would not be abandoned!

YAOUMA. We are not! Gods! Gods!

MIERIS. Gods! We need gods! There are too many sorrows, it is not possible this earth should groan as it groans beneath a pitiless heaven — Ammon, reveal thyself.

YAOUMA. Isis, show thyself! Have pity! [*A pause. Then in a hushed voice*] Mistress, I think she is going

to appear to me again! — Isis! — mistress — do you hear —

MIERIS [*listening*] I hear nothing.

YAOUMA. Singing — the sound of harps — 't is she —

MIERIS. I do not hear —

YAOUMA. She speaks! Yes — goddess!

MIERIS. Do you see her?

YAOUMA [*in ecstasy*] I see her! She is bending down above us —

MIERIS. O goddess! —

YAOUMA. She is gone — Mistress, you could not see her, but did you hear the sound of her feet?

MIERIS. Yes. I believe I heard it — I believe and I am comforted.

YAOUMA. I am happy! To the temple! She beckoned me! To the temple! Come!

They go up. Rheou meets them and leads them away. Satni enters with some men bearing Pakh, who is wounded. Kirjipa almost swooning follows, supported by some women who lead her into the house. The Exorcist, who with his two assistants follows Pakh, takes some clay from a coffer carried by one of his men, shapes it into a ball, and begins, then, the incantation.

EXORCIST. Pakh! Son of Ritii! Through thy wound an evil spirit has entered thee. I am about to speak the words that shall drive him out: "The virtues of him who lies there, and who suffers, are the virtues of the father of the gods. The virtues of his brow are the virtues of the brow of Thoumen. The virtues of his eye are the virtues of the eye of Horus, who destroys all creatures."

A pause.

PAKH. Begone!

EXORCIST. His upper lip is Isis. His lower lip is Neptes, his neck is the goddess, his teeth are swords, his flesh is Osiris, his hands are divine souls, his

fingers are blue serpents, snakes, sons of the goddess Sekhet —

PAKH. Begone! I no longer believe in your power!

EXORCIST [*taking a doll from the coffer*] Horus is there! Ra is there! Let them cry to the chiefs of Heliopolis —

PAKH. Have done!

He knocks down the doll which the Exorcist holds over him. The music stops suddenly.

EXORCIST. The evil spirits are strongest in him. He will die. Only his son has the right to be with him at death.

All go out save Pakh and Satni.

SATNI. My father —

PAKH. You are there, my son — 't is well — I am glad — that that maker of spells is gone. [*Simply*] Heal me.

SATNI. Yes, father, you shall be healed. But you must have patience.

PAKH [*simply*] Heal me, now, at once.

SATNI. I cannot.

PAKH. Why do you not want to heal me? — See you not that I am wounded — I suffer — come, give me ease —

SATNI. I would give all, that it were in my power to do so.

PAKH. You know prayers that our priests know not —

SATNI. I know no prayers.

PAKH. [*in anguish*] You are not going to let me die?

SATNI. You will not die — have confidence.

PAKH. Confidence? In what? [*A pause*] You cannot heal me?

SATNI. I cannot.

PAKH. All your knowledge, then, is but knowledge of how to destroy — My son! — I pray you — my

blood goes out with my life — I do not want to die! I pray you — give me your hand. I seem to be sinking into night — hold me back — you will not let me die — your father! I am your father. I gave you life — hold me back — all grows dim around me — But at least do something — speak — say the incantations — [*He raises himself*] No! No! I refuse to die! I am not old. [*Strongly*] I will not! I will not! Do not let go my hand! I would live, live — All my life, I have worked, I have sorrowed, I have suffered — Satni — will you let me go before I share the peace and happiness you promised —

SATNI. Oh! My father!

PAKH. You weep — I am lost, then — Yes — I have seen it in your eyes. And the silence deepens around me. To die — to die — [*A long pause*] And after? [*Pause*] And so this is a poor man's life! Work from childhood, blows. Then work, always, without profit. Only for bread. And still work. For others. Not one pleasure. We die. And 't is finished! You came back to teach me that — Work — blows — misery — the end. [*A silence*] What did you come here to do? Is that your work? [*Strongly*] Satni, Satni! Give me back my faith! I want it! Ah! Why were you born a destroyer? Is that your truth? You are evil — you were able to prove that all was false. Prove to me now that you lied! I demand it! Give me back my faith, give me back the simple mind that will comfort me.

SATNI. Do not despair —

PAKH. I despair because the happy fields do not exist —

SATNI. Yes, father, yes, they exist —

PAKH. You lied, then!

SATNI. I lied.

PAKH. They exist — and if I die —

SATNI. If you die, you will go to Osiris, you will become Osiris.

PAKH. It is not true. 'T is now you lie — There is no Osiris! There is no Osiris! Nothing! there is nothing — but life. I curse you, you who taught me that [*He almost falls from his litter, Satni reverently lifts him up*] Ah! accursed! Accursed! I die in hate, in rage, in fear. Bad son! Bad man! I curse you, come near. [*Seizing him by the throat*] Oh! If I were strong enough! — I would my nails might pierce your throat — Ah! Ah! accursed! [*He lets him go*] All my life lost! All my suffering useless! — Forever — Never! Never! shall I know — Pity! [*He holds out his arms to Satni and falls dead*].

SATNI [*horror-stricken*] He is dead! — [*He lifts him reverently and lays him on the litter*] Father! For me, too, at this moment there would have been comfort in a lie —

He weeps, kneeling by the body with his arms stretched over it. Kirjipa appears at the door of the house. She comes near, then standing upright cries out to the four points of the horizon, tearing her hair.

KIRJIPA. The master is dead! The master is dead! The master is dead! The master is dead!

The five mourners appear outside, Delethi, Nasit, Hanou, Zaya, and Nagaou.

KIRJIPA [*with cries that are calls*] The master is dead! The master is dead!

MOURNERS [*entering*] The master is dead! The master is dead!

Music till the end of the scene.

KIRJIPA. O my father!

MOURNERS [*louder and in a chant*] O my master! O my father!

KIRJIPA. O my beloved!

MOURNERS. The she-wolf, death; the she-wolf, death; the she-wolf, death, has taken him!

They rush at the body, kissing it with piercing cries. They beat their breasts, uttering long cries, after silent pauses. Kirjipa and another woman dance a hieratic dance, their feet gliding slowly over the ground. They bend to gather handfuls of earth, which they scatter on their heads as they dance. The cries are redoubled.

KIRJIPA [*after bowing before the corpse*] Go in peace towards Abydos! Go in peace towards Osiris!

ALL. Towards Abydos! Towards Osiris! To the West, thou who wast the best of men!

KIRJIPA. If it please the gods, when the day of eternity comes, we shall see thee, for behold thou goest towards the earth that mixeth men.

ALL. Towards Abydos! Towards Osiris!

They make believe to bear away the corpse; ritual movements.

KIRJIPA. O my husband! O my brother! O my beloved! Stay, live in thy place. Pass not away from the earthly spot where thou art! Leave him! Leave him! Wherefore are ye come to take him who abandons me.

MOURNERS [*in a fury of despair*] Groans! Groans! Tears! Sobs! Sobs! Make, make lamentation without end, with all the strength that is given you.

The music stops.

KIRJIPA [*to the corpse*] Despair not. Thy son is there!

They point to Satni.

ALL. Despair not. Thy son is there!

DELETHI. When I have spoken, and after me Hanou, and after her Nazit, thy son will speak the magic words, whose power shall make thee go even unto Osiris, before the two and forty judges. They shall place thy heart in the balance, and thou shalt say: "I have done wrong to no man, I have done nothing that is abominable in the sight of the gods."

SATNI [*to himself*] No, I will not speak the magic words.

The music begins again.

ALL. Despair not! Thy son is there!

HANOU. Despair not, thy son is there. When I have spoken and after me Nazit, thy son will say the magic prayers whose power shall bring thee even unto Osiris, and thou shalt say: "I have starved none, I have made none weep, I have not killed, I have not robbed the goods of the temples."

SATNI [*to himself*] No, I will say no useless words.

ALL. Despair not! Thy son is there!

NAZIT. Despair not! Thy son is there! When I have spoken he will say the sacred words whose power shall bring thee even unto Osiris and thou shalt say: "I did not filch the fillets from the mummies, I did not use false weights, I did not snare the sacred birds. I am pure — "

ALL. I am pure! I am pure! —

KIRJIPA [*continuing*] Give to me what is my due, to me who am pure. Give me all that heaven gives, all that the earth brings forth, all that the Nile bears down from its mysterious springs. Despair not! Thy son is there! Thy son will say the sacred words!

A pause. All look at Satni.

SATNI. No, I will not say words that are lies!

General consternation, Kirjipa comes to him and lays her hands on his shoulders.

KIRJIPA. Speak the sacred words!

SATNI. No!

KIRJIPA. Accursed!

She falls in a swoon. The women press round her. Satni bursts into sobs.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

SCENE: — *The interior of a temple.*

Columns, huge as towers and covered with hieroglyphics. On the left the Sanctuary; in the foreground in a little nook, invisible to the faithful, but visible to the audience is installed the machinery for the miracle, a lever, and ropes. Against the central pillar two thrones, one magnificent, that of the Pharaoh; the other simple, that of the High Priest.

The Pharaoh, the High Priest, an officer, an old man, and six priests discovered. When the curtain rises all are seated, the priests on little chairs between the two thrones.

THE OFFICER [*prostrated before the Pharaoh*] Pharaoh! may Ammon-Ra preserve thy life in health and strength!

THE PHARAOH [*with fury*] My orders! My orders!

THE OFFICER. Lord of the two Egypts, friend of Ra, favorite of Mentu, may Ammon —

THE PHARAOH. Enough! my orders!

THE OFFICER. I would have died —

THE PHARAOH. The wish shall be granted, be assured, and soon! My orders! Dog, why did you not carry out my orders?

THE OFFICER. Satni —

THE PHARAOH. Satni! Yes, Satni, the impostor! Where is he?

THE OFFICER. Pharaoh — may Ammon, Soukou Ra, Horus —

THE PHARAOH. I will have you whipped till your blood run — Satni! Where is Satni! I sent you to seize him! Where is he?

THE OFFICER. No one knows.

THE PHARAOH. Scoundrel! You are his accomplice!

THE OFFICER. O Ammon!

THE PHARAOH. Did you go to the house of his father, to Rheou?

THE OFFICER. We searched them in vain.

THE PHARAOH. He has taken flight, then?

THE OFFICER. I know not.

THE PHARAOH. You are a traitor! You shall die! Take him out! And you others, hear the commands of the High Priest and begone.

HIGH PRIEST. Let each fulfil the mission he is charged with. Let the young priests mix with the crowd, the moment it enters the Temple. Let them excite the people's fervor, that as many prodigies as possible may be won from the goddess. Now when you are gone the stones that screen the sanctuary will roll away before the Pharaoh and the High Priest; and, first by right, they shall behold the goddess face to face. Humbly prostrated we shall speak to her the mysterious words that other men have never heard. Bow down before the Pharaoh, may he live in health and strength [*All kneel and remain with their faces on the ground during what follows, save an old man whom the High Priest calls to his side by a sign; and to whom he says in low tones*] Let the man Satni be taken from the crypt where he is imprisoned [*The old man bows*] When I give the signal let them bring him here. While the Pharaoh goes in procession through the town let them do what I have told you [*The old man bows*] [*To the others*] Rise! [*To the Pharaoh*] Son of Ammon-Ra, bow down before him who represents the god.

[*The Pharaoh rises and after a slight hesitation bows down before the High Priest*] Withdraw, we would pray. [*Motionless the High Priest and the Pharaoh wait till the last of the assistants are gone*].

THE PHARAOH [*giving up his hieratic pose, angrily*] I would all the flies of Egypt might eat thy tongue.

HIGH PRIEST [*without feeling*] The flies of Egypt are too many and my tongue is too small, for your wish to be realized, Pharaoh.

THE PHARAOH. This is the result of my weakness!

HIGH PRIEST [*with flattering unction*] The Pharaoh, Son of Ammon-Ra — Lord of the two Egypts — Friend of Ra —

THE PHARAOH. Enough! Enough! We are alone. There are none whom your words may deceive. And your mock-reverence fools not me. You would not let me put Satni to death, your subtleties confused my mind, I gave in to you, and now Satni escapes us.

HIGH PRIEST. You should not let anger master you for that.

THE PHARAOH. Satni has foretold to thousands of ears that there will be no miracle.

HIGH PRIEST. The miracle will be.

THE PHARAOH. Who knows that?

HIGH PRIEST. I.

THE PHARAOH. Satni has declared he will enter the temple —

HIGH PRIEST. 'T is possible.

THE PHARAOH. He has declared he knows the secret recess, whence one of your priests makes the head of the image move.

HIGH PRIEST. Most like he speaks the truth.

THE PHARAOH. He declares the miracle will not take place. If the people suffer this disappointment, tell me what chance can there be for the war of conquest I would wage in Ethiopia?

HIGH PRIEST. Why wage a war of conquest in Ethiopia?

THE PHARAOH. I need gold. I need women. I need slaves. There will be a share of the spoil for your temple.

HIGH PRIEST. I like not bloodshed.

THE PHARAOH. The treasury is empty. Our whippings are useless now. Our blows no longer bring forth taxes. If the people lose confidence in the gods, what will happen to-morrow? Who will follow me, unless they believe the gods confirm my orders?

HIGH PRIEST. Satni will not prevent the miracle.

THE PHARAOH. What do you know of it?

HIGH PRIEST. I know.

THE PHARAOH. Is Satni dead?

HIGH PRIEST. He lives.

THE PHARAOH [*suddenly guessing*] You are hiding him!

HIGH PRIEST. Yes.

THE PHARAOH. You knew I was about to rid me of him, and you took him to prevent me?

HIGH PRIEST. Yes.

THE PHARAOH. What do you intend?

HIGH PRIEST. It shall be done with him as I wish, not as you wish.

THE PHARAOH. His crime is a crime against Egypt.

HIGH PRIEST. A crime against me. That is still more grave. Therefore be satisfied.

THE PHARAOH. Why then all these ceremonies before you kill him?

HIGH PRIEST. That all may know his faults.

THE PHARAOH. Satni was one of yours, and you defend him.

HIGH PRIEST. We must not make martyrs — if we can avoid it. In killing Satni you would have killed

only a man. If what I dream succeed, I shall kill his work. That is a better thing.

THE PHARAOH. What will you make of him?

HIGH PRIEST. A priest.

THE PHARAOH. A priest?

HIGH PRIEST. He was initiated before he went away. He was then a young man, pious and wise. On his travels he lost some piety, and gained some wisdom.

THE PHARAOH. Have I not always said: "it is not good to travel."

HIGH PRIEST. I think like you. Travellers learn too much. Yet am I hopeful. I shall bring him back to our gods.

THE PHARAOH. You will fail.

HIGH PRIEST. He who for long has breathed the air of temples can never wholly clear his breast of it. If he give way, he shall never leave the house of the Gods again, if he be still rebellious, he shall leave to go to his death.

THE PHARAOH. I order you to give Satni up to me.

HIGH PRIEST. I would I might bow to your will. But he is a priest: his life is sacred. And I may not trangress the orders given me by the Gods.

THE PHARAOH. Prate not of these follies to me — do you take me for one of your priests? Obey! I command you!

HIGH PRIEST. Do you take me for one of your soldiers?

THE PHARAOH. I command it.

HIGH PRIEST. The gods forbid.

THE PHARAOH. I laugh at your gods.

HIGH PRIEST. Beware lest your people hear.

THE PHARAOH. I would be master, in truth. And more, I refuse to submit to the humiliation that again you put on me a while ago.

HIGH PRIEST. How should that humiliate you? Before you, the highest bow down.

THE PHARAOH. Yes. And straightway, then, I must bow me down before you.

HIGH PRIEST. You salute not me, but the god whom I represent.

THE PHARAOH. I pay homage to the god, it is the priest who receives it.

HIGH PRIEST [*faintly smiling*] Rest assured! I pass it on to him.

THE PHARAOH. And you mock me, besides! Oh! if I but dared to kill you, hypocrite!

HIGH PRIEST. Vain man!

THE PHARAOH. You tremble at sight of a sword, coward!

HIGH PRIEST. Being a butcher, you know only how to kill.

THE PHARAOH. Liar!

HIGH PRIEST. Who made you Pharaoh?

THE PHARAOH. Beware lest one day I have you thrown to my lions!

HIGH PRIEST. Beware lest one day I strike the crown of the two Egypts from your head, telling the people the god has set his face against you! [*A pause*] Come, we must work together. We complete each other. To govern men, we have both the reality of the evils you inflict on them, and the hope of the good I promise them. Believe me, we must work together. The day that one of us disappears, the fate of the other will be in jeopardy — I perceive they make sign to me. They think our prayers are long and fervent. The hour is come for you to receive the acclamation of your people, and follow them to the shrine of Isis — when Satni will not prevent the miracle, I pledge my word to that.

The cortége comes on and goes out with Pharaoh. Satni is led before the High Priest.

HIGH PRIEST. You know me again!

SATNI [*troubled*] Yes, you are the High Priest.

HIGH PRIEST [*with sweet gentleness*] I, too, I know you again. Your father is a potter. You were brought up and taught by us. In the crowd of neophytes I singled you out by your gentleness, your great intelligence; and I saw you destined for the highest dignities. I esteemed you, I was fond of you. We took you from wretchedness. What you know, for the most part, you owe to us. This thing that you have done should anger me — I am only sad, my son. [*A pause*] You are troubled.

SATNI. Yes, I looked for threats, for torture. The kindness of your voice unmans me.

HIGH PRIEST. Be not distressed. Forget who I am. None hear us. Let us talk together as father and son. Or better, since your learning makes you worthy, as two men. You have proclaimed broadcast that the miracle will not come to pass.

SATNI. The goddess is stone. Stone does not move itself. The image will not bow its head unless man intervene.

HIGH PRIEST. That is evident.

SATNI. You admit it?

HIGH PRIEST. To you, yes. We give to each one the faith he deserves. Had you remained with us, at each step in the priesthood you would have beheld the gods rise with you, become more immaterial, more noble, as you became more learned. We give to the people the gods they can understand. Our god is different. He is the one who exists in essence. The one who lives in substance, the sole procreator who was not engendered, the father of the fathers, the mother of mothers. The one and only. And we crave his pardon for belitting him by miracles. But they are part of that faith which alone contents the simple-minded. You are above them

— I admit freely that the miracle could be prevented. You declared it would not take place — you have found the means to make it impossible?

SATNI [*suspecting the trap*] I said that, left to herself, the goddess would not move.

HIGH PRIEST. To say only that, would not have served you. You intended to prevent the miracle. Come, admit it — it is so.

SATNI. Perhaps.

HIGH PRIEST. By seizing you, I prevent your committing the sacrilege. Your purpose will not be realized. In an hour the festival of the Prodigy will take place, and you are my prisoner. It follows then, the miracle will be performed — you believe that, do you not?

SATNI [*after a pause*] Yes, I believe it.

HIGH PRIEST. And so your cause is lost. [*A pause*] Listen to me; the priests who have taken their final vows are as wise and as little credulous as you. I offer you a place among them. Return to us. A little wisdom banishes the gods — great wisdom brings them back.

SATNI. I refuse.

HIGH PRIEST. My son, my son, you will not cause me this sorrow. Think what you will drive me to, if you refuse — Satni, do not force me to send you before the tribunal, whose sentence must be death. Death, for you, so young, whose future is so bright!

SATNI. I do not fear death.

HIGH PRIEST. Besides — I mind me — you were betrothed to that little Yaouma whom the god has chosen as victim. You know she may be saved from the sacrifice, if she become the wife of a priest. They guarded her but ill at Rheou's house, she is here. I have seen her; she is kind and gentle, and you would lead a happy life with her.

SATNI. Yaouma! Yaouma! [*He hides his face*]

HIGH PRIEST [*laying a hand on his shoulder*] So that on one side is Yaouma's death and yours; on the other, happiness with her — and power. Say nothing. I speak as a father might, you can see. I say besides, that you will better serve the crowd in leaving them their gods. I wish to convince you of it, and you will stay with us — weep no more. You will stay, will you not? Wait! Hear me, before you answer. You seek happiness for the lower orders? There is no happiness for them without religion. Already you have seen what they become, when it is taken from them. The riots of yesterday cost your father his life. He suffered much, they tell me. Is it true? I do not know the details. You saw him die, did you not? Tell me how it happened.

SATNI. Ah! I was right. It was in truth torture that awaited me here. You have guessed you would gain nothing racking my body — you keep your torments for my heart.

HIGH PRIEST. Have I said other than what is true? The conversions that your preaching made were followed by disorders — was it not then that your father was wounded? I knew him. He was a man, simple and good. You are the cause of his death, as you will be the cause of Yaouma's.

SATNI. Peace! You would have my sorrows crush my will!

HIGH PRIEST. I shall speak of them no more. But think of the people of Egypt, what evils you would bring on them! If you take away their religion, what will keep them virtuous?

SATNI. What you call their virtue, is only their submission.

HIGH PRIEST. You let loose their vilest instincts, if you remove the fear of the gods.

SATNI. The fear of the gods has prevented fewer crimes than were needed to create it.

HIGH PRIEST. Be it so. But it exists.

SATNI. It is your interest to spread the belief, that the fear of the gods is a restraint. And you know that it is not. You do not leave the punishment of crime to the gods. You have the lash, hard labor in the mines; you have scaffolds, you have executioners. No one believes sincerely in the happy life beyond the grave. If we believed, we should kill ourselves, the sooner to reach the Island of the Souls, the fields of Yalou.

HIGH PRIEST. By what then are the appetites restrained?

SATNI. By the laws, by the need of the esteem of others —

HIGH PRIEST. We have just seen that, in sooth. So then it was virtue that the people showed yesterday, after you made them break their gods? They seemed to care little for the esteem of others, for they stole, they pillaged, they killed. Do you approve of that? Have they gained your esteem, those who have done what they have done?

SATNI. Oh, I know! I know! That is your strongest argument. Creatures degraded by centuries of slavery, drunk with the first hours of freedom, commit crimes. You argue from this, that they were meant for slaves. Yes, it is true that if you take a child from the leading strings that upheld it, the child falls down. But you who watch over it, you rejoice at the fall, for then you can assert that the child must go back to its leading strings — and be kept in them till death.

HIGH PRIEST. Then you declare that all supports must be suppressed? [*A pause*] Religion is a prop. It soothes — consoles. He does evil who disturbs it.

SATNI. Many religions died before ours. The pass-

ing of each caused the sorrows you foresee. Should we then have kept the first, to prevent some suffering?

High Priest. Ours is yet young, though so old; look in the halls of our temples, behold the countless thank-offerings brought there for prayers that were granted.

Satni. Your temples could not hold the offerings, unthinkable in number, that those whose prayers were not granted might have made, and who none the less prayed as well as the others.

High Priest. Even unanswered their prayers were recompensed. They had hope, and it is likewise a boon to the poor to promise them welfare in the world to come.

Satni. You promise them welfare in the world to come, to make them forget that all the welfare in this world is yours.

High Priest. Can you give happiness to all who are on earth? We are more generous than you; at least we give them consolation.

Satni. You make them pay dear for it.

High Priest. In truth the granaries of our temples are full to overflowing. Left to themselves, the people would not think of the lean years, in the years of abundance. We think for them, and they bring us, gladly, what they would refuse did they not believe they gave to the gods. We proclaim the Nile sacred; it is forbidden to sully its waters. Is that to honor it as a god? Not so, it is to avoid the plague. And all the animals we deified are those man has need of. You did not learn all things on your travels —

Satni. You would have the peasant remain a child, because you fear the reckoning he would demand of you, if you let him grow up. You know you could not stay him then by showing him the god-jackal, the god-ram, the god-bull, and the rest that do not exist.

High Priest. Are you certain they do not exist?

Satni. Yes.

HIGH PRIEST. Know you where you are?

SATNI. In the temple.

HIGH PRIEST. In the temple; where you were brought up. There was a time when you dared not have crossed the first sacred enclosure. You are in the third. Look round! There is the holy of holies. At my will the stones that mask the entrance will roll back, and the goddess will be unveiled. Except the High Priest and the Pharaoh, no mortal, if he be not priest himself, may look on her and live — save at the hour of the annual Festival of Prodigies, which is upon us now. Do you believe that you can endure to be alone in her presence?

SATNI. I do believe it.

HIGH PRIEST. We shall see. If you be afraid, call and prostrate yourself. Afterwards you shall go and tell what you have seen, to those whom you deceived.

The High Priest makes a sign. Total darkness. A peal of thunder.

SATNI. Ah! [*Terrified, he leaps forward. A faint light returns slowly, the temple is empty*] I am alone! [*He is terrified, standing erect against a pillar facing the audience*] Alone in the temple, within sight of the goddess almost. I know 't is but an image — yet am I steeped in terror, even to the marrow of my bones. [*He utters an agonised cry*] Ah! — I thought I beheld in the darkness — No — I know that there is nothing — Oh! coward nature! Because I was cradled amid tales of religion, because I grew up in the fear of the gods, because my father and my father's father, and all those from whom I come, were crushed by this terror even from the blackest night of time, I tremble, and my reason totters. All this is false, I know — the god obeys the priest. Yet, from these towering columns, horror and mystery descend upon me — [*A thunder clap brings him to his knees. The stones that mask the entrance to*

the sanctuary roll slowly back. He tries to look] The holy of holies opens — I am afraid — I am afraid — [*He mutters words, wipes the sweat from his brow with his hand. He trembles and falls sobbing to the ground. A long pause*] 'T is the beast in me that is afraid — Ah! coward flesh! [*Biting his hands*] I shall conquer thee — I would chastise my weakness. I am shamed — I am shamed — In spite of all I will look her in the face. I have the will! but I must fight against so many memories, against all the dead whose spirits stir in mine. I shall conquer the dead. My life, and my will — courage!

With great effort and after many struggles he gains the mastery of himself, goes to the shrine and looks upon the goddess. The High Priest reappears touching him on the shoulder.

High Priest. Terror does not move you. Let us see if you be proof against pity. Come — [*He leads him to the side of the shrine, presses a spring and a door opens, revealing in the interior of the shrine the machinery of the miracle, a lever and cordage*] Look! 'T is by pressing this lever that one of ours, in a little while, will bring about the miracle. I leave you in his place. At my signal the doors of the sacred enclosure will open, and the people draw near the sanctuary. Listen to them. And if you are moved to pity by their prayers, you — *you* shall give them the consoling lie for which they pray.

Satni. There will be no miracle.

High Priest. Watch and hear. [*He leaves Satni, who remains visible to the audience. The stones roll back over the shrine. The High Priest makes a sign, other priests appear*] All is ready?

A Priest. All.

High Priest [*to another*] Listen.

He whispers to him. The Priest bows and goes out.

While the crowd comes in later, this priest is seen to enter the hiding-place right, where he stands watching Satni, dagger in hand.

HIGH PRIEST. Now, let them come in.

He makes a gesture and all disappear. A pitiable crowd bursts into the temple, bustling, running, filling all the empty spaces. Four men carry a litter on which is a beautiful young woman clothed in precious stuffs. Mieris, Yaouma, and all the characters of the play come on.

YOUNG WOMAN. Nearer, lay me nearer the goddess! She will drive forth the evil spirit that will not let me move my legs.

Cripples, people on crutches, creatures with hands or feet wrapped in bandages crowd past her.

A BLIND GIRL [*to him who leads her*] When the stone rolls back and the goddess appears, watch well her face, to tell me if she will not give me back my sight.

A paralytic drags himself in on his hands.

THE PARALYTIC. I would be quite near, quite near! In a little while I shall walk.

Two sons lead in their mother, who is mad, striving to calm her. A mother, with her child in her arms, begs the crowd to let her get near. A man, whose head is bandaged, and whose eyes and mouth are mere holes, hustles his neighbors. Many blind, and people borne on chairs.

A WOMAN. She will speak, she will say "yes." She will reveal herself again as protectress of Egypt.

ANOTHER. They say not. They say that great calamities are in store for us.

ANOTHER. If she answer not?

ANOTHER. Silence!

Music. The Pharaoh's procession enters. He is conducted down left where he remains invisible to the spec-

tators. The High Priest mounts his throne. The people prostrate themselves.

HIGH PRIEST. Ammon is great!

A pause.

THE PEOPLE. Ammon is great!

HIGH PRIEST. The sanctuary is about to open.

VOICES. The stones will roll back! I am afraid! The goddess will appear! We shall behold her! Hush! Hush!

The High Priest lifts his hands to heaven.

A PRIEST [*in the recess, to some men ready to work the ropes, in a low voice*] Now!

The men pull the ropes, the stones roll back. The crowd bow themselves flat on the ground. Those who cannot, hide their faces on their arms.

HIGH PRIEST. Rise! Behold and pray! [*A smothered cry of terror rises, women mad with terror are seized with nervous fits. They are carried out*] O goddess! Thy people adore thee, and humble themselves before thee!

ALL. Isis, we adore thee!

HIGH PRIEST. This year, once more, show to us by that miraculous sign of thy divine head, that still thou art our protectress. [*The people repeat the incantation in a murmur*] O goddess, if thou hast pity on those who suffer, thou wilt bend thy head. Pity! Pity! we suffer! The evil spirits torment us.

THE PEOPLE. We suffer! Drive forth the evil spirits!

HIGH PRIEST. Neith! Mother of the Universe! The evil spirits torment us! Neith! Virgin genetrix! Isis, sacred earth of Egypt, bend thy head! Sati, queen of the heavens! Bend thy head!

THE MOTHER. The soul of a dead man has entered the body of my child, O Isis! And he is dying. I hold him towards thee, Isis. Behold how he is fair, behold

how he suffers. Look, he is so little. Let me keep him! Isis! Isis! Let me keep him!

ALL. Pity! Pity!

HIGH PRIEST. Show us that thou dost consent to hear us! Isis, bend thy head!

BLIND GIRL. Open my eyes! Ever since I was born a demon held them closed. Let me see the skies of whose splendor they tell me. I am unhappy, Isis! He whom I love, he who loves me, I have not looked upon his countenance! I am unhappy, Isis!

ALL. Pity! Pity!

HIGH PRIEST. Anouke! Soul of the Universe! Pity! We are before thee like little children who are lost.

THE PEOPLE. Yes! Yes! like little children who are lost!

THE SON. For my father who is blind, Isis, I implore thee!

ALL. Isis! Father! Pity!

HIGH PRIEST. Thmei, Queen of Justice! Mirror of truth! Bend thy head!

THE YOUNG PARALYTIC. I have offered up ten lambs to thee. Let me get up and walk!

THE MAN [*with the bandaged head*] An unseen monster devours my face making me howl with pain.

PARALYZED MAN. I drag through the mire, like a beast unclean. Let me walk upright like a god.

THE TWO SONS [*of the mad woman*] Behold our mother, Isis, behold our mother, who knows us no more, who knows not herself even, and who laughs! —

THE MOTHER. Isis! Thou art a mother. Isis, in the name of thine own child, save mine. Let me not go with empty arms, bereft of my tender burden. Thou art a mother, Isis!

HIGH PRIEST. All! All! Pray! Supplicate! Fling

you with your faces to the ground — yes! yes! again! Silence! She is about to answer. [*A long pause*] Your prayers are lukewarm. Your supplications need fervor! Pray! Weep! Cry out! Cry out!

ALL. Isis! Drive out the evil spirits! Answer us! Answer us!

HIGH PRIEST. Louder! Louder!

THE PEOPLE. Sorrows! Tears! Sobs! Cries! Have pity!

HIGH PRIEST. Once more, though you die!

THE PEOPLE. Thou dost abandon Egypt! What ills will overwhelm us! Help! Help us! Have pity!

HIGH PRIEST. Have pity! Have pity! [*bursting into sobs*] Oh! unhappy people, Isis, if thou dost abandon them.

VOICES [*amid the sobs of the others*] She hears us not! She answers not. Evil is upon us! Evil overwhelms us!

HIGH PRIEST. Desperate! We are desperate!

ALL. We are desperate!

A CRY. Her head is bending! No! Yes!

Silence. Then a great cry of distress and disappointment.

HIGH PRIEST. O mother! O goddess!

THE MOTHER. O Isis! mother of Horus! the child god! Wilt thou let die my child? Behold him! Behold him!

YOUNG PARALYTIC. Thy heart is hard, O goddess!

PARALYZED MAN. Thou hast but to will it, Isis, and I walk!

THE MAN [*with the bandaged head*] Heal my sores! I sow horror around me! Heal my sores!

HIGH PRIEST. Answer us! Bend thy head!

ALL. Pity!

The crowd, delirious, cries and sobs in a paroxysm of despair.

SATNI. Oh! the poor wretched souls!

He presses the lever. As the head of the statue bows, the people respond with one wild roar of acclamation.

CURTAIN

ACT V

SCENE: — *Same as Acts I and II.*

The statues of the gods are set up again, in their places, facing them a throne has been erected on which the High Priest is seated. Rheou, Satni, Mieris, Yaouma, Sokiti, Nourm, Bitiou, the Steward and all the women and servants of the household, and the laborers. When the curtain rises all are prostrate with their faces to the ground.

HIGH PRIEST [*after a pause*] Rise! [*All rise to their knees. A pause*] The divine images are again in their places. You have shown that you repent. You have begged for pardon. You have testified your horror of the terrible crime you were driven to commit. You await your chastisement. The gods now permit that we proceed to the sacrifice, that will bring about the overflowing of the Nile, and give for yet another year, life to the land of Egypt. She who has chosen, the elect, the savior, is she here?

YAOUMA [*rising to her feet, radiant*] I am here!

HIGH PRIEST. Let her go to clothe her in the sacred robe. Form the procession to bear her to the threshold of the abode of the glorious and the immortal.

YAOUMA. Come!

A number of the women rise and go out right with Yaouma.

HIGH PRIEST. To-day, at the hour when Ammon-Ra came forth from the underworld, I entered the sanctu-

ary. Face to face with the god, I heard his words, which now you shall hear from me. These are the commands of the God. Rheou! [*Rheou stands up*] You have been to make submission to the Pharaoh — Light of Ra — you have implored his mercy. You have sworn on the body of your father, to serve him faithfully, and you have given that body to him in pledge of your obedience. You have denounced to his anger and justice those who conceived the impious plot to dethrone the Lord of Egypt. You have declared that if you did permit the images of the gods to be thrown down before you, it was because the spells of Satni had clouded your reason. Ammon has proclaimed to me that you are sincere! You are pardoned, on conditions which I shall presently impart. [*Rheou bows and kneels down*] Satni! [*Satni stands up. He casts down his eyes, he is steeped in sorrow and shame*] Satni, you have admitted and proclaimed the power of the gods, whom you dared to deny. You have bowed you down before them. Once, in the temple, you took the first priestly vows; your life is therefore sacred. But you stand now reproved. This very day you will quit Egypt. Withdraw from the Gods! [*Satni, with eyes on the ground, withdraws, the people shrink aside to let him pass, abusing him in whispers, shaking their fists, and some even striking him. He goes to the terrace down left where he stands, hiding his face on his arm*] Ammon has spoken other words. [*The people turn from Satni*] All you who are here, you are guilty of the most odious, the most monstrous of crimes. You are all deserving of death. Such is the decree of the God.

ALL. O Ammon! Pity! Pity! Ammon!

HIGH PRIEST. Cease your sobs! Cease your cries! Cease your useless prayers! Hear the God who speaks through my mouth.

ALL. Be kind! Thou! Thou! Have pity! Beseech

the God for us, we implore thee! We would not die. Not death! not death! not death!

High Priest. Yes — I — I have pity on you. But your crime is so great! Have you considered well the enormity of your sin? None can remember to have seen the like. The Gods! To overthrow the Gods! And such Gods! Ammon and Thoueris! I would I might disarm their wrath. But what shall I offer them in your name that may equal your offence?

People. All! Take all we possess, but spare our lives.

High Priests. All you possess! 'T is little enough.

People. Take our crops.

High Priest. And who then will feed you? Already you pay tithes. I will offer a fourth of your harvests for ten years. But 't is little. Even did I say you would give half of all that is in your homes, should I succeed? And would you give it me?

People. Yes! Yes!

High Priest. Still it will not be enough. Hear what the God hath breathed to me. There must be prayers, ceaseless prayers in the temple. Every year ten of your daughters must enter the house of the God to be consecrated.

People. Our daughters! Ammon! Our daughters!

High Priest. The God is good! The God is good! Lo! I hear him pronounce the words of pardon. But further, you must needs assist the Pharaoh to carry out the divine commands. Ammon wills that the Ethiopian infidels be chastised. All who are of an age to fight will join the army, that is on the eve of departure.

People [*in consternation*] Oh! the war! the war!

High Priest. Proud Ethiopia threatens invasion to Egypt. You must defend your tombs, your homes, and your women. Would you become slaves of the blacks?

People. No, no, we would not!

HIGH PRIEST. You will go to punish the foes of your kings?

PEOPLE. We will go.

HIGH PRIEST. And what will be your reward? Know you not that victory will be yours, because the god is with you. And if some fall in battle, should we not all envy their fate, since they leave this world to go towards Osiris. The arrows of your foes will fall harmless at your feet, like wounded birds. Their swords shall bend on your invulnerable bodies. The fire they light against you will become as perfumed water. All this you know to be true. You know that your gods protect you. You know they are all-powerful, because, yesterday, you all did see how the stone image of the goddess Isis did bow, to show you she protects you.

PEOPLE. To the war! To the war! To Ethiopia!

SATNI [*leaping up to the terrace*] I have been coward too long! [*To the crowd*] The miracle of yesterday — 't was I — 't was I who worked it.

General uproar.

HIGH PRIEST. I deliver this man to you, and I deliver you to him. You will not let him deceive you twice.

Execrations of the people, Satni cannot speak. The High Priest is borne out on his throne accompanied by Rheou.

SATNI [*when the uproar subsides*] I was in the temple —

PEOPLE. That is a lie!

SATNI. It was I who made the head of the image bow.

PEOPLE. He blasphemes. Have done! Have done! Let him not blaspheme!

SATNI. It was I! And I ask your forgiveness.

A MAN. Why should you do it, if you despise our gods?

SATNI. I did it out of pity.

PEOPLE. We have no need of your pity.

SATNI. That is true. You have need only of my courage. And I failed you. I was touched by your tears. I was weak, thinking to be kind.

A MAN. You are not kind. You would have handed us over to foreign gods.

PEOPLE. Yes! yes! that is true!

SATNI. I gave you the lie that you begged for. I wanted to lull your sorrows to sleep.

A MAN. You have brought down on us the anger of the gods.

ANOTHER. The evils that crush us, 't is you have let them loose on us.

ALL. Yes, yes! Liar! Curse you! Let him be accursed!

SATNI. Curse me. You are right. I am guilty. I had not the strength to persevere; to lead you, in spite of your tears, to the summits I would lead you to. To still a few sobs, to give hope to some who were stricken, I worked the miracle; and, beholding that false miracle, you made submission. I have confirmed, I have strengthened the empire of the lie.

A MAN. 'T was you who lied.

SATNI. I have given back your minds, for another age, to slavery and debasement. I have given back to the priests their power that was endangered. I have given them means to increase your burdens, to take your daughters, to send you to a war, covetous, murderous, and unjust.

A MAN. You are a spy from Ethiopia!

ANOTHER. You are a traitor to your country!

ALL. Yes! a traitor! Death to the traitor!

SATNI. And to defend your tyrants, you will kill men as wretched as yourselves, dupes like you, and like you enslaved.

A MAN. We know you are paid to betray Egypt!

ALL. Yes, we know it! We know the price of your treason!

ANOTHER. You would sell Egypt, and 't is to weaken us you would overthrow our gods.

ALL. Traitor! Traitor!

SATNI. If I am a traitor, 't is to my own cause! But a while ago I was proud of my deed, thinking I had sacrificed myself to you. Alas! I only sacrificed your future to my pity. I wept for you; to weep for misfortune — what is that but an easy escape from the duty of fighting its cause? I pitied you. Pity is but a weakness, a submission — To perpetuate the falsehood of the miracle, and the life of atonement to come, is to drug misery to sleep.

A MAN. Misery! — can you give us anything to cure it?

They laugh.

SATNI. They have implanted in you, the belief that misery is immortal, invincible. By my falsehood, I too have seemed to admit this; and thus I have helped those, in whose interest it is that misery should last for ever.

A MAN. He insults the Pharaoh!

ANOTHER. Do not insult our priests!

SATNI. Had there been no miracle, you would have despaired — you would have sorrowed. I ought to have faced that. I ought to have faced the death of a few, to save the future of all. We go forward only by destroying. What matter blood and pain! Pain and blood — never a child is born without them! I would —

An angry outburst.

A WOMAN. Kill him! Kill him! He says we must put our children to death!

SATNI. All are glorious who preach new efforts —

PEOPLE. Death! Death to the traitor!

SATNI. All are infamous who preach resignation —

PEOPLE. Enough! Kill him! Death!

SATNI. It is in this world that the wretched must find their paradise, it is here that every one's good must be sought with a zeal that knows no limit, save respect for the good of others.

A burst of laughter.

PEOPLE. He is mad! He knows not what he says! He is mad!

Yaouma is borne on right on a litter carried by young girls. She is decked out like an idol; she stands erect, half in ecstasy.

PEOPLE. Yaouma! The chosen of Ammon-Ra! Glory to her who goes to save Egypt!

With jubilant cries the procession goes slowly towards the gates at the back, preceded and surrounded by musicians and dancers.

SATNI. Yaouma! Yaouma! One word! One look of farewell! Yaouma! 'T is I, Satni! Look on me!

The acclamations drown his voice. Yaouma is wrapped in her soul's dream. She passes without hearing Satni's voice. The crowd follows her.

MIERIS [*to Delethi who supports her*] Lead me to Satni — go — [*To Satni*] Satni, your words have sunk deep in my heart — Yaouma, they tell me, did not hear your voice. She is lost in the joy of sacrifice. The need to make sacrifice is in us all. If the gods are not, to whom shall we sacrifice ourselves?

SATNI. To those who suffer.

MIERIS. To those who suffer.

During this Bitiou has come slowly down behind Satni.

BITIOU. Look! He too, he will fall down!

He plunges a dagger in Satni's back. Delethi draws Mieris away. Satni falls.

SATNI [*raising himself slightly*] It was you who struck me, Bitiou — [*He looks long and sadly at him*]

I pity you with all my heart — with all my heart. [*He dies*]

Bitiou looks at the blood on the dagger, and flings it away in horror. Then he crouches down by Satni and begins to cry softly.

DELETHI [*to Mieris*] Mistress, come and pray!

MIERIS. No, I do not believe in gods in whose name men kill.

Outside are heard the trumpets and acclamations that accompany Yaouma to the Nile.

CURTAIN

THE RED ROBE

CHARACTERS

MOUZON
VAGRET
ETCHEPARE
MONDOUBLEAU
LA BOUZOLE
BUNERAT
ATTORNEY-GENERAL
PRESIDENT OF ASSIZES
DELORME
ARDEUIL
BRIDET
POLICE SERGEANT
RECORDER
PLAÇAT
DOORKEEPER
YANETTA
ETCHEPARE'S MOTHER
MADAME VAGRET
MADAME BUNERAT
BERTHA
CATIALÉNA

Time — The present.

ACT I

SCENE I: — *A small reception-room in an old house at Mauleon.*

The curtain rises, revealing Madame Vagret in evening dress; she is altering the position of the chairs to her own satisfaction. Enter Bertha, also in evening dress, a newspaper in her hand.

BERTHA. Here 's the local paper, the *Journal.* I sent the *Official Gazette* to father; he has just come home from the Court. He 's dressing.

MADAME VAGRET. Is the sitting over?

BERTHA. No, not yet.

MADAME VAGRET [*taking the newspaper*] Are they still discussing the case?

BERTHA. As usual.

MADAME VAGRET. One does n't need to search long. There 's a big head-line at the top of the page: "The Irissary Murder." They 're attacking your father now! [*She reads*] "Monsieur Vagret, our District Attorney." [*She continues to read to herself*] And there are sub-headings too: "The murderer still at large." As if that was our fault! "Justice asleep!" Justice asleep indeed! How can they say such things when your father has n't closed his eyes for a fortnight! Can they complain that he has n't done his duty? Or that Monsieur Delorme, the examining magistrate, is n't doing his? He has made himself quite ill, poor man! Only the day before yesterday he had a tramp arrested because his movements were ever so little suspicious! So you see! No! I tell you these journalists are crazy!

BERTHA. It seems they are going to have an article in the Basque paper too.

MADAME VAGRET. The *Eskual Herria!*

BERTHA. So the chemist told me.

MADAME VAGRET. I don't care a sou for that. The Attorney-General does n't read it.

BERTHA. On the contrary, father was saying the other day that the Attorney-General has translations sent him of every article dealing with the magistracy.

MADAME VAGRET. The Attorney-General has translations sent him! Oh well, never mind. Anyhow, let 's change the subject! How many shall we be this evening? You 've got the list?

BERTHA [*She takes the list from the over-mantel*] The President of Assizes — the President of the Court —

MADAME VAGRET. Yes. Yes, that 's all right; nine in all, is n't it?

BERTHA. Nine.

MADAME VAGRET. Nine! To have nine people coming to dinner, and not to know the exact hour at which they 'll arrive! That 's what 's so trying about these dinners we have to give at the end of a session — in honor of the President of Assizes. One dines when the Court rises. When the Court rises! Well, we 'll await the good pleasure of these gentlemen! [*She sighs*] Well, child!

BERTHA. Mother?

MADAME VAGRET. Are you still anxious to marry a magistrate?

BERTHA [*with conviction*] I am not!

MADAME VAGRET. But you were two years ago!

BERTHA. I am not now!

MADAME VAGRET. Look at us! There 's your father. Procurator of the Republic — Public Prosecutor — State Attorney; in a court of the third class,

it 's true, because he 's not a wire-puller, because he has n't played the political game. And yet he 's a valuable man — no one can deny that. Since he 's been District Attorney he has secured three sentences of penal servitude for life! And in a country like this, where crimes are so frightfully rare! That 's pretty good, don't you think? Of course, I know he 'll have had three acquittals in the session that ends to-day. Granted. But that was mere bad luck. And for protecting society as he does — what do they pay him? Have you any idea?

BERTHA. Yes, I know; you 've often told me, mother.

MADAME VAGRET. And I 'll tell you again. Counting the stoppages for the pension, he gets altogether, and for everything, three hundred and ninety-five francs and eighty-three centimes a month. And then we are obliged to give a dinner for nine persons in honor of the President of Assizes, a Councillor! Well, at all events, I suppose everything is ready? Let 's see. My *Revue des Deux Mondes* — is it there? Yes. And my armchair — is that in the right place? [*She sits in it*] Yes. [*As though receiving a guest*] Pray be seated, Monsieur le Président. I hope that 's right. And Monsieur Dufour, who was an ordinary magistrate when your father was the same, when we were living at Castelnaudery, he 's now President of the second class at Douai, and he was only at Brest before he was promoted!

BERTHA. Really!

MADAME VAGRET [*searching for a book on the overmantel*] Look in the Year Book.

BERTHA. I 'll take your word for it.

MADAME VAGRET. You may! The Judicial Year Book. I know it by heart!

BERTHA. But then father may be appointed Councillor any day now.

MADAME VAGRET. He 's been waiting a long time for his appointment as Councillor.

BERTHA. But it 's as good as settled now. He was promised the first vacancy, and Monsieur Lefévre has just died.

MADAME VAGRET. I hope to God you are right. If we fail this time, we 're done for. We shall be left at Mauleon until he 's pensioned off. What a misfortune it is that they can't put their hands on that wretched murderer! Such a beautiful crime too! We really had some reason for hoping for a death sentence this time! The first, remember!

BERTHA. Don't worry, motherkins. There 's still a chance.

MADAME VAGRET. It 's easy for you to talk. You see the newspapers are beginning to grumble. They reproach us, they say we are slack. My dear child, you don't realize — there 's a question of sending a detective down from Paris! It would be such a disgrace! And everything promised so well! You can't imagine how excited your father was when they waked him up to tell him that an old man of eighty-seven had been murdered in his district! He dressed himself in less than five minutes. He was very quiet about it. But he gripped my hands. " I think," he said, " I think we can count on my nomination this time!" [*She sighs*] And now everything is spoilt, and all through this ruffian who won't let them arrest him! [*Another sigh*] What 's the time?

BERTHA. It has just struck six.

MADAME VAGRET. Write out the *menus*. Don't forget. You must write only their titles — his Honor the President of Assizes, his Honor the President of the High Court of Mauleon, and so forth. It 's the preamble to the *menu*. Don't forget. Here is your father. Go and take a look round the kitchen and

appear as if you were busy. [*Bertha leaves the room. Vagret enters in evening dress*]

SCENE II: — *Vagret, Madame Vagret.*

MADAME VAGRET. Has n't the Court risen yet?

VAGRET. When I left my substitute was just getting up to ask for the adjournment.

MADAME VAGRET. Nothing new?

VAGRET. About the murder? Nothing.

MADAME VAGRET. But your Monsieur Delorme — the examining magistrate — is he really looking for the murderer?

VAGRET. He 's doing what he can.

MADAME VAGRET. Well, if I were in his place, it seems to me — Oh, they ought to have women for examining magistrates! [*Distractedly*] Is there nothing in the *Official Gazette*?

VAGRET [*dispirited and anxious*] Yes.

MADAME VAGRET. And you never told me. Anything that affects us?

VAGRET. No. Nanteuil has been appointed Advocate-General.

MADAME VAGRET. Nanteuil?

VAGRET. Yes.

MADAME VAGRET. Oh, that 's too bad! Why, he was only an assistant at Lunéville when you were substitute there!

VAGRET. Yes. But he has a cousin who 's a deputy. You can't compete with men like that. [*A pause. Madame Vagret sits down and begins to cry*]

MADAME VAGRET. We have n't a chance.

VAGRET. My dearest! Come, come, you are wrong there.

MADAME VAGRET [*still tearful*] My poor darling! I know very well it is n't your fault; you do your best.

Your only failing is that you are too scrupulous, and I am not the one to reproach you for that. But what can you expect? It 's no use talking; everybody gets ahead of us. Soon you 'll be the oldest District Attorney in France.

VAGRET. Come, come! Where 's the Year Book?

MADAME VAGRET [*still in the same tone*] It 's there — the dates, the length of service. See further on, dear.

VAGRET [*throwing the Year Book aside*] Don't cry like that! Remember I 'm chosen to succeed Lefévre.

MADAME VAGRET. I know that.

VAGRET. I 'm on the list for promotion.

MADAME VAGRET. So is everybody.

VAGRET. And I have the Attorney-General's definite promise — and the presiding judge's too.

MADAME VAGRET. It 's the deputy's promise you ought to have.

VAGRET. What?

MADAME VAGRET. Yes, the deputy's. Up to now you 've waited for promotion to come to you. My dear, you 've got to run after it! If you don't do as the others do, you 'll simply get left behind.

VAGRET. I am still an honest man.

MADAME VAGRET. It is because you are an honest man that you ought to try to get a better appointment. If the able and independent magistrates allow the others to pass them by, what will become of the magistracy?

VAGRET. There 's some truth in what you say.

MADAME VAGRET. If, while remaining scrupulously honest, you can better our position by getting a deputy to push you, you are to blame if you don't do so. After all, what do they ask you to do? Merely that you should support the Ministry.

VAGRET. I can do that honestly. Its opinions are my own.

MADAME VAGRET. Then you 'd better make haste —

for a ministry does n't last long! To support the Ministry is to support the Government — that is, the State — that is, Society. It 's to do your duty.

VAGRET. You are ambitious.

MADAME VAGRET. No, my dear — but we must think of the future. If you knew the trouble I have to make both ends meet! We ought to get Bertha married. And the boys will cost us more and more as time goes on. And in our position we are bound to incur certain useless expenses which we could very well do without; but we have to keep up appearances; we have to "keep up our position." We want Georges to enter the Polytechnique, and that 'll cost a lot of money. And Henri, if he 's going to study law — you 'd be able to help him on all the better if you held a better position.

VAGRET [*after a brief silence*] I have n't told you everything.

MADAME VAGRET. What is it?

VAGRET [*timidly*] Cortan has been appointed Councillor at Amiens.

MADAME VAGRET [*exasperated*] Cortan! That idiot of a Cortan?

VAGRET. Yes.

MADAME VAGRET. This is too much!

VAGRET. What can you expect? The new Keeper of the Seals is in his department. You can't fight against that!

MADAME VAGRET. There 's always something — Cortan! Won't she be making a show of herself — Madame Cortan — who spells "indictment" i-n-d-i-t-e? She 'll be showing off her yellow hat! Don't you remember her famous yellow hat?

VAGRET. No.

MADAME VAGRET. It 's her husband who ought to wear that color!

VAGRET. Rosa, that 's unjust.

MADAME VAGRET [*painfully excited*] I know it — but it does me good!

Enter Catialéna.

CATIALÉNA. Madame, where shall I put the parcel we took from the linen-closet this morning?

MADAME VAGRET. What parcel?

CATIALÉNA. The parcel — you know, Madame — when we were arranging the things in the linen-closet.

MADAME VAGRET [*suddenly*] Oh — yes, yes. Take it to my room.

CATIALÉNA. Where shall I put it there?

MADAME VAGRET. Oh well, put it down here. I will put it away myself.

CATIALÉNA. Very good, Madame. [*She leaves the room*]

MADAME VAGRET [*snipping at the parcel and speaking to herself*] It 's no use stuffing it with moth-balls — it 'll all be moth-eaten before ever you wear it.

VAGRET. What is it?

MADAME VAGRET [*placing the parcel on the table and opening the wrapper*] Look!

VAGRET. Ah, yes — my red robe — the one you bought for me — in advance — two years ago.

MADAME VAGRET. Yes. That time it was Gamard who was appointed instead of you.

VAGRET. What could you expect? Gamard had a deputy for his brother-in-law; there 's no getting over that. The Ministry has to assure itself of a majority.

MADAME VAGRET. And to think that in spite of all my searching I have n't been able to discover so much as a municipal councillor among our relations!

VAGRET. Well — hide this thing. It torments me. [*He returns the gown, which he had unfolded, to his wife*] In any case I dare say it would n't fit me now.

MADAME VAGRET. Oh, they fit anybody, these things!

VAGRET. Let 's see — [*He takes off his coat*]

MADAME VAGRET. And it means a thousand francs more a year!

VAGRET. It is n't faded. [*At this moment Bertha enters. Vagret hides the red gown*] What is it?

BERTHA. It 's only me.

VAGRET. You startled me.

BERTHA [*catching sight of the gown*] You 've been appointed! You 've been appointed!

VAGRET. Do be quiet! Turn the key in the door!

BERTHA. Papa has been appointed!

MADAME VAGRET. Do as you 're told! No, he has n't been appointed.

VAGRET. It 's really as good as new. [*He slips it on*]

MADAME VAGRET. Well, I should hope so! I took care to get the very best silk.

VAGRET. Ah, if I could only wear this on my back when I 'm demanding the conviction of the Irissary murderer! Say what you like, the man who devised this costume was no fool! It 's this sort of thing that impresses the jury. And the prisoner too! I 've seen him unable to tear his eyes from the gown of the State Attorney! And you feel a stronger man when you wear it. It gives one a better presence, and one's gestures are more dignified: "Gentlemen of the court, gentlemen of the jury!" Could n't I make an impressive indictment? "Gentlemen of the court, gentlemen of the jury! In the name of society, of which I am the avenging voice — in the name of the sacred interests of humanity — in the name of the eternal principles of morality — fortified by the consciousness of my duty and my right — I rise — [*He repeats his gesture*] I rise to demand the head of the wretched man who stands before you!"

MADAME VAGRET. How well you speak!

Vagret, with a shrug of the shoulders and a sigh, slowly and silently removes the gown and hands it to his wife.

VAGRET. Here — put it away.

MADAME VAGRET. There 's the bell.

BERTHA. Yes.

MADAME VAGRET [*to her daughter*] Take it.

BERTHA. Yes, mother. [*She makes a parcel of the gown and is about to leave the room*]

MADAME VAGRET. Bertha!

BERTHA. Yes, mother!

MADAME VAGRET [*tearfully*] Put some more moth-balls in it — poor child!

Bertha goes out. Catialéna enters.

SCENE III: — *Vagret, Madame Vagret, Catialéna.*

CATIALÉNA [*holding out an envelope*] This has just come for you, sir. [*She goes out again*]

VAGRET. What 's this? The Basque paper — the *Eskual Herria* — an article marked with blue pencil. [*He reads*] "Eskual herri guzia hamabartz egun huntan —" How 's one to make head or tail of such a barbarian language!

MADAME VAGRET [*reading over his shoulder*] It 's about you —

VAGRET. No!

MADAME VAGRET. Yes. There! "Vagret procuradoreak galdegin —" Wait a minute. [*Calling through the further doorway*] Catialéna! Catialéna!

VAGRET. What is it?

MADAME VAGRET. Catialéna will translate it for us. [*To Catialéna, who has entered*] Here, Catialéna, just read this bit for us, will you?

CATIALÉNA. *Why, yes, Madame.* [*She reads*] "Eta gaitzegilia ozda oraino gakpoian Irrysaryko."

VAGRET. And what does that mean?

CATIALÉNA. That means — they have n't arrested the Irissary murderer yet.

VAGRET. We know that. And then?

CATIALÉNA. "Baginakien yadanik dona Mauleano tribunala yuye arin edo tzarrenda berechiazela." That means there are no magistrates at Mauleon except those they 've got rid of from other places, and who don't know their business — empty heads they 've got.

VAGRET. Thanks — that 's enough.

MADAME VAGRET. No, no! Go on, Catialéna!

CATIALÉNA. "Yaun hoyen Biribi — "

MADAME VAGRET. Biribi?

CATIALÉNA. Yes, Madame.

MADAME VAGRET. Well, what does Biribi mean in Basque?

CATIALÉNA. I don't know.

MADAME VAGRET. What? You don't know? You mean you don't want to say? Is it a bad word?

CATIALÉNA. Oh no, Madame, I should know it then.

VAGRET. Biribi —

BERTHA. Perhaps it 's a nickname they give you.

MADAME VAGRET. Perhaps that 's it. [*A pause*] Well?

CATIALÉNA. They 're speaking of the master.

MADAME VAGRET [*to her husband*] I told you so. [*To Catialéna*] Abusing him?

VAGRET. I tell you that 's enough! [*He snatches the paper from Catialéna and puts it in his pocket*] Go back to the kitchen. Hurry now — quicker than that!

CATIALÉNA. Well, sir, I swear I won't tell you the rest of it.

VAGRET. No one 's asking you to. Be off.

CATIALÉNA. I knew the master would be angry. [*She turns to go*]

MADAME VAGRET. Catialéna!

CATIALÉNA. Yes, Madame?

MADAME VAGRET. Really now, you don't know what Biribi means?

CATIALÉNA. No, Madame, I swear I don't.

MADAME VAGRET. That 's all right. There 's the bell — go and see who it is. [*Catialéna goes*] I shall give that woman a week's notice, and no later than to-morrow.

VAGRET. But really —

CATIALÉNA [*returning*] If you please, sir, it 's Monsieur Delorme.

MADAME VAGRET. Your examining magistrate?

VAGRET. Yes. He 's come to give me his reply. [*To Catialéna*] Show him in.

MADAME VAGRET. What reply?

VAGRET. He has come to return me his brief.

MADAME VAGRET. The brief?

VAGRET. Yes. I asked him to think it over until this evening.

MADAME VAGRET. He 'll have to stay to dinner.

VAGRET. No. You know perfectly well his health — Here he is. Run away.

MADAME VAGRET [*amiably, as she goes out*] Good-evening, Monsieur Delorme.

DELORME. Madame!

SCENE IV: — *Vagret, Delorme.*

VAGRET. Well, my dear fellow, what is it?

DELORME. Well, it 's no — positively no.

VAGRET. Why?

DELORME. I 've told you. [*A pause*]

VAGRET. And the *alibi* of your accused?

DELORME. I 've verified it.

VAGRET. Does it hold water?

DELORME. Incontestably.

VAGRET [*dejectedly*] Then you 've set your man at liberty?

DELORME [*regretfully*] I simply had to.

VAGRET [*the same*] Obviously. [*A pause*] There is not a chance?

DELORME. No.

VAGRET. Well, then?

DELORME. Well, I beg you to give the brief to someone else.

VAGRET. Is that final?

DELORME. Yes. You see, my dear fellow, I 'm too old to adapt myself to the customs of the day. I 'm a magistrate of the old school, just as you are. I inherited from my father certain scruples which are no longer the fashion. These daily attacks in the press get on my nerves.

VAGRET. They would cease at the news of an arrest.

DELORME. Precisely. I should end by doing something foolish. Well, I have done something foolish already. I should not have arrested that man if I had not been badgered as I was.

VAGRET. He was a tramp. You gave him shelter for a few days. There 's no great harm done there.

DELORME. All the same —

VAGRET. You let yourself be too easily discouraged. To-night or to-morrow something may turn up to put you on a new scent.

DELORME. Even then — Do you know what they are saying? They are saying that Maître Plaçat, the Bordeaux advocate, is coming to defend the prisoner.

VAGRET. I don't see what he has to gain by that.

DELORME. He wants to come forward at the next election in our arrondissement — and he counts on attacking certain persons in his plea, so as to gain a little popularity.

VAGRET. How can that affect you?

DELORME. Why, he can be present at all the interrogations of the accused. The law allows it — and as

he is ravenous for publicity, he would tell the newspapers just what he pleased, and if my proceedings did n't suit him, I 'd be vilified in the papers day after day.

VAGRET. You are exaggerating.

DELORME. I 'm not. Nowadays an examination takes place in the market-place or the editorial offices of the newspapers rather than in the magistrate's office.

VAGRET. That is true where notorious criminals are concerned. In reality the new law benefits them and them only — you know as well as I do that for the general run of accused persons —

DELORME. Seriously, I beg you to take the brief back.

VAGRET. Come! You can't imagine that Maître Plaçat, who has a hundred cases to plead, can be present at all your interrogations. You know what usually happens. He 'll send some little secretary — if he sends anyone.

DELORME. I beg you not to insist, my dear Vagret. My decision is irrevocable.

VAGRET. Then —

DELORME. Allow me to take my leave. I don't want to meet my colleagues who are dining with you.

VAGRET. Then I 'll see you to-morrow. I 'm sorry —

DELORME. Good-night.

He goes out. Madame Vagret at once enters by another door.

SCENE V: — *Vagret, Madame Vagret, then Bertha, Bunerat, La Bouzole, Mouzon.*

MADAME VAGRET. Well, I heard — he gave you back the brief.

VAGRET. Yes — his health — the newspapers —

MADAME VAGRET. And now?

VAGRET. Be careful. No one suspects anything yet.

MADAME VAGRET. Make your mind easy. [*She listens*] This time it is our guests.

BERTHA [*entering*] Here they are.

MADAME VAGRET. To your work, Bertha! And for me the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

They sit down. A pause.

BERTHA. They are a long time.

MADAME VAGRET. It 's Madame Bunerat. Her manners always take time.

THE MANSERVANT. His Honor the President of the Court and Madame Bunerat.

MADAME VAGRET. How do you do, dear Madame Bunerat? [*They exchange greetings*]

THE MANSERVANT. His Honor Judge La Bouzole. His worship Judge Mouzon.

Salutations; the guests seat themselves.

MADAME VAGRET [*to Madame Bunerat*] Well, Madame, so another session 's finished!

MADAME BUNERAT. Yes, at last!

MADAME VAGRET. Your husband, I imagine, is not sorry.

MADAME BUNERAT. Nor yours, I 'm sure.

MADAME VAGRET. And the President of Assizes?

BUNERAT. He will be a little late. He wants to get away early to-morrow morning, and he has a mass of documents to sign. You must remember the Court has barely risen. When we saw that we should be sitting so late we sent for our evening clothes, and we changed while the jury was deliberating; then we put our robes on over them to pronounce sentence.

MADAME VAGRET. And the sentence was?

BUNERAT. An acquittal.

MADAME VAGRET. Again! Oh, the juries are crazy!

VAGRET. My dear, you express yourself just a little freely.

MADAME BUNERAT. Now, my dear Madame Vagret, you must n't worry yourself.

She leads her up the stage.

BUNERAT [*to Vagret*] Yes, my dear colleague, an acquittal. That makes three this session.

MOUZON [*a man of forty, whiskered and foppish*] Three prisoners whom we have had to set at liberty because we could n't hold them for other causes.

BUNERAT. A regular run on the black!

LA BOUZOLE [*a man of seventy*] My dear colleagues would prefer a run on the red.

BUNERAT. La Bouzole, you are a cynic! I do not understand how you can have the courage to joke on such a subject.

LA BOUZOLE. I should n't joke if your prisoners were condemned.

MOUZON. I 'm not thinking of our prisoners — I 'm thinking of ourselves. If you imagine we shall receive the congratulations of the Chancellery, you are mistaken.

BUNERAT. He does n't care a straw if the Mauleon Court does earn a black mark in Paris.

LA BOUZOLE. You have said it, Bunerat; I don't care a straw! I have nothing more to look for. I shall be seventy years old next week, and I retire automatically. Nothing more to hope for; I have a right to judge matters according to my own conscience. I 'm out of school! [*He gives a little skip*] Don't get your backs up — I 've done — I see the Year Book over there; I 'm going to look out the dates of the coming vacation for you. [*He takes a seat to the left*]

BUNERAT. Well, there it is. [*To Vagret*] The President of Assizes is furious.

MOUZON. It won't do him any good either.

VAGRET. And my substitute?

BUNERAT. You may well say "your substitute"!

MOUZON. It's all his fault. He pleaded extenuating circumstances. He!

BUNERAT. Where does the idiot hail from?

VAGRET. He's far from being an idiot, I assure you. He was secretary to the Conference in Paris; he is a doctor of laws and full of talent.

BUNERAT. Talent!

VAGRET. I assure you he has a real talent for speaking.

BUNERAT. So we observed.

VAGRET. He's a very distinguished young fellow.

BUNERAT [*with emphasis*] Well! When a man has such talent as that he becomes an advocate; he does n't enter the magistracy.

MADAME VAGRET [*to La Bouzole, who approaches her*] So really, Monsieur La Bouzole, it seems it's the fault of the new substitute.

MADAME BUNERAT. Tell us all about it.

LA BOUZOLE. It was like this. [*He turns towards the ladies and continues in a low tone. Bertha, who has entered the room, joins the group, of which Vagret also forms one*]

MOUZON [*to Bunerat*] All this won't hasten our poor Vagret's nomination.

BUNERAT [*smiling*] The fact is he has n't a chance at the present moment, poor chap!

MOUZON. Is it true that they were really seriously thinking of him when there is a certain other magistrate in the same court?

BUNERAT [*with false modesty*] I don't think I — Of whom are you speaking?

MOUZON. Of yourself, my dear President.

BUNERAT. They have indeed mentioned my name at the Ministry.

MOUZON. When you preside at Assizes the proceedings will be far more interesting than they are at present.

BUNERAT. Now how can you tell that, my dear Mouzon?

MOUZON. Because I have seen you preside over the Correctional Court. [*He laughs*]

BUNERAT. Why do you laugh?

MOUZON. I just remembered that witty remark of yours the other day.

BUNERAT [*delighted*] I don't recall it.

MOUZON. It really was very witty! [*He laughs*]

BUNERAT. What was it? Did I say anything witty? I don't remember.

MOUZON. Anything? A dozen things — a score. You were in form that day! What a figure he cut — the prisoner. You know, the fellow who was so badly dressed. Cock his name was.

BUNERAT. Ah, yes! When I said: "Cock, turn yourself on and let your confession trickle out!"

MOUZON [*laughing*] That was it! That was it! And the witness for the defence — that idiot. Did n't you make him look a fool? He could n't finish his evidence, they laughed so when you said: "If you wish to conduct the case, only say so. Perhaps you 'd like to take my place?"

BUNERAT. Ah, yes! Ladies, my good friend here reminds me of a rather amusing anecdote. The other day — it was in the Correctional Court —

THE MANSERVANT [*announcing*] Monsieur Gabriel Ardeuil.

SCENE VI: — *The same, with Ardeuil.*

ARDEUIL [*to Madame Vagret*] I hope you 'll forgive me for coming so late. I was detained until now.

MADAME VAGRET. I will forgive you all the more readily since I 'm told you have had such a success to-day as will make all the advocates of the district jealous of you.

Ardeuil is left to himself.

LA BOUZOLE [*touching him on the shoulder*] Young man — come, sit down by me — as a favor. Do you realize that it won't take many trials like to-day's to get you struck off the rolls?

ARDEUIL. I could n't be struck off the rolls because —

LA BOUZOLE. Hang it all — a man does himself no good by appearing singular.

ARDEUIL. Singular! But you yourself — Well, the deliberations are secret, but for all that I know you stand for independence and goodness of heart in this Court.

LA BOUZOLE. Yes, I 've permitted myself that luxury — lately.

ARDEUIL. Lately?

LA BOUZOLE. Yes, yes, my young friend, for some little time. Because for some little time I 've been cured of the disease which turns so many honest fellows into bad magistrates. That disease is the fever of promotion. Look at those men there. If they were n't infected by this microbe, they would be just, kindly gentlemen, instead of cruel and servile magistrates.

ARDEUIL. You exaggerate, sir. The French magistracy is not —

LA BOUZOLE. It is not venal — that 's the truth. Among our four thousand magistrates you might per-

haps not find one — you hear me, not one — even among the poorest and most obscure — who would accept a money bribe in order to modify his judgment. That is the glory of our country's magistracy and its special virtue. But a great number of our magistrates are ready to be complaisant — even to give way — when it is a question of making themselves agreeable to an influential elector, or to the deputy, or to the minister who distributes appointments and favors. Universal suffrage is the god and the tyrant of the magistrate. So you are right — and I am not wrong.

ARDEUIL. Nothing can deprive us of our independence.

LA BOUZOLE. That is so. But, as Monsieur de Tocqueville once remarked, we can offer it up as a sacrifice.

ARDEUIL. You are a misanthrope. There are magistrates whom no promise of any kind —

LA BOUZOLE. Yes, there are. Those who are not needy or who have no ambitions. Yes, there are obscure persons who devote their whole lives to their professions and who never ask for anything for themselves. But you can take my word for it that they are the exceptions, and that our Court of Mauleon, which you yourself have seen, represents about the average of our judicial morality. I exaggerate, you think? Well! Let us suppose that in all France there are only fifty Courts like this. Suppose there are only twenty — suppose there is only one. It is still one too many! Why, my young friend, what sort of an idea have you got of the magistracy?

ARDEUIL. It frightens me.

LA BOUZOLE. You are speaking seriously?

ARDEUIL. Certainly.

LA BOUZOLE. Then why did you become a substitute?

ARDEUIL. Through no choice of my own! My people pushed me into the profession.

La Bouzole. Yes. People look on the magistracy as a career. That is to say, from the moment you enter it you have only one object — to get on. [*A pause*]

Ardeuil. Yet it would be a noble thing — to dispense justice tempered with mercy.

La Bouzole. Yes — it should be. [*A pause*] Do you want the advice of a man who has for forty years been a judge of the third class?

Ardeuil. I should value it.

La Bouzole. Send in your resignation. You have mistaken your vocation. You wear the wrong robe. The man who attempts to put into practice the ideas you have expressed must wear the priest's cassock.

Ardeuil [*as though to himself*] Yes — but for that one must have a simple heart — a heart open to faith.

Bunerat [*who is with the others*] If only we had the luck to have a deputy of the department for Keeper of the Seals! Just for a week!

La Bouzole [*to Ardeuil*] There, my boy, that 's the sort of thing one has to think about.

The Manservant [*entering*] From his Honor the President of Assizes. [*He gives Vagret a letter*]

Vagret. He is n't coming?

Madame Vagret [*after reading the note*] He is n't coming.

Bunerat. I hardly expected him.

Madame Vagret. A nervous headache he says. He left by the 6:49 train.

Mouzon. That 's significant!

Madame Bunerat. It would be impossible to mark his disapproval more clearly.

Bunerat. Three acquittals too!

Madame Bunerat. If it had been a question of celebrated pleaders! But newly fledged advocates!

Bunerat. Nobodies!

MADAME VAGRET [*to her daughter*] My poor child! What will his report be like?

BERTHA. What report?

MADAME VAGRET. Don't you know? At the close of each session the President submits a report to the Minister — Ah, my dear Madame Bunerat! [*The three women seat themselves at the back of the stage*]

MOUZON. Three acquittals — and the Irissary murder. A deplorable record! A pretty pickle we 're in.

BUNERAT. You know, my dear Vagret, I 'm a plain speaker. No shilly-shallying about me. When I hunt the boar I charge right down on him. I speak plainly — anyone can know what 's in my mind. I 'm the son of a peasant, I am, and I make no bones about it. Well, it seems to me that your Bar — I know, of course, that you lead it with distinguished integrity and honesty — but it seems to me — how shall I put it? — that it 's getting weak. Mouzon, you will remember, said the same thing when he was consulting the statistics.

MOUZON. It really is a very bad year.

BUNERAT. You know it was a question of making ourselves an exception to the general rule — of getting our Court raised to a higher class. Well, Mauleon won't be raised from the third class to the second if the number of causes diminishes.

MOUZON. We should have to prove that we had been extremely busy.

BUNERAT. And many of the cases you settled by arrangement might well have been the subject of proceedings.

MOUZON. Just reflect that this year we have awarded a hundred and eighteen years less imprisonment than we did last year!

BUNERAT. And yet the Court has not been to blame. We safeguard the interests of society with the greatest vigilance.

MOUZON. But before we can punish you must give us prisoners.

VAGRET. I have recently issued the strictest orders respecting the repression of smuggling offences, which are so common in these parts.

BUNERAT. Well, that 's something. You understand the point of view we take. It 's a question of the safety of the public, my dear fellow.

MOUZON. We are falling behind other Courts of the same class. See, I 've worked out the figures. [*He takes a paper from his pocket-book and accidentally drops other papers, which La Bouzole picks up*] I see —

LA BOUZOLE. You are dropping your papers, Mouzon. Is this yours — this envelope? [*He reads*] "Monsieur Benoît, Officer of the Navy, Railway Hotel, Bordeaux." A nice scent —

MOUZON [*flurried, taking the letter from La Bouzole*] Yes — a letter belonging to a friend of mine.

LA BOUZOLE. And this? The Irissary murder?

MOUZON. Ah, yes — it 's — I was going to explain — it 's — oh, the Irissary murder, yes — it 's the translation Bunerat gave me of the article which appeared in the *Eskual Herria* to-day. It is extremely unpleasant. They say Mauleon is a sort of penal Court — something like a Biribi of the magistracy.

VAGRET. But, after all, I can't invent a murderer for you just because the fellow is so pig-headed that he won't allow himself to be taken! Delorme has sent the description they gave us to the offices of all the magistrates.

MOUZON. Delorme! Shall I tell you what I think? Well, our colleague Delorme is making a mistake in sticking to the idea that the criminal is a tramp.

VAGRET. But there is a witness.

MOUZON. The witness is lying, or he 's mistaken.

BUNERAT. A witness who saw gipsies leaving the victim's house that morning.

MOUZON. I repeat, the witness is lying, or he is mistaken.

VAGRET. Why so?

MOUZON. I 'm certain of it.

BUNERAT. Why?

MOUZON. Because I 'm certain the murderer was n't a gipsy.

VAGRET. But explain —

MOUZON. It 's of no use, my dear friend. I know my duty to my colleague Delorme too well to insist. I 've said too much already.

VAGRET. Not at all.

BUNERAT. By no means.

MOUZON. It was with the greatest delicacy that I warned our colleague Delorme — he was good enough to consult me and show me day by day the information which he had elicited — I warned him that he was on a false scent. He would listen to nothing; he persisted in searching for his tramp. Well, let him search! There are fifty thousand tramps in France. After all, I am probably wrong. Yet I should be surprised, for in the big towns in which I have served as magistrate, and in which I found myself confronted, not merely now and again, but every day, so to speak, with difficulties of this sort, I was able to acquire a certain practice in criminal cases and a certain degree of perspicacity.

VAGRET. Obviously. As for Delorme, it is the first time he has had to deal with such a big crime.

MOUZON. In the case of that pretty woman from Toulouse, at Bordeaux, a case which made a good deal of stir at the time, it was I who forced the accused to make the confession that led her to the guillotine.

BUNERAT [*admiringly*] Was it really?

VAGRET. My dear friend, I ask you most seriously — and if I am insistent, it is because I have reasons for being so — between ourselves, I beg you to tell us on what you base your opinion.

MOUZON. Well, I don't want to hide my light under a bushel — I 'll tell you.

BUNERAT. We are listening.

MOUZON. Recall the facts. In a house isolated as are most of our Basque houses they find, one morning, an old man of eighty-seven murdered in his bed. Servants who slept in the adjacent building had heard nothing. The dogs did not bark. There was robbery, it is true, but the criminal did not confine himself to stealing hard cash; he stole family papers as well. Remember that point. And I will call your attention to another detail. It had rained on the previous evening. In the garden footprints were discovered which were immediately attributed to the murderer, who was so badly shod that the big toe of his right foot protruded from his boot. Monsieur Delorme proceeds along the trail; he obtains a piece of evidence that encourages him, and he declares that the murderer is a vagrant. I say this is a mistake. The murderer is not a vagrant. Now the house in which the crime was committed is an isolated house, and we know that within a radius of six to ten miles there was no tramp begging before the crime. So this tramp, if there was one, would have eaten and drunk on the scene of the crime, either before or after striking the blow. Now no traces have been discovered which permit us to suppose that he did anything of the kind. So — here is a man who arrives in a state of exhaustion. He begs; he is refused. He then hides himself, and, when it is night, he robs and assassinates. There is wine and bread and other food at hand; but he goes his way without touching them. Is this probable? No. Don't tell me that he was dis-

turbed and so ran off; it is not true; their own witness declares that he saw him in the morning, a few yards from the house, whereas the crime was committed before midnight. If Monsieur Delorme, in addition to his distinguished qualities, had a little experience of cases of this kind, he would realize that empty bottles, dirty glasses, and scraps of food left on the table constitute, so to speak, the sign manual which the criminal vagrant leaves behind him on the scene of his crime.

BUNERAT. True; I was familiar with that detail.

LA BOUZOLE [*under his breath to Ardeuil*] That fellow would send a man to the scaffold for the sake of seeming to know something.

VAGRET. Go on — go on.

MOUZON. Monsieur Delorme ought to have known this also: in the life of the vagrant there is one necessity which comes next to hunger and thirst — it is the need of footwear. This is so true that they have sometimes been known to make this need a pretext for demanding an appeal, because the journey to the Court of Appeal is generally made on foot, so that the administration is obliged to furnish shoes, and, as these are scarcely worn during the period of detention, they are in good condition when the man leaves prison. Now the supposed vagrant has a foot very nearly the same size as that of his victim. He has — you yourself have told us — boots which are in a very bad condition. Well, gentlemen, this badly shod vagrant does not take the good strong boots which are in the house! I will add but one word more. If the crime had been committed by a passing stranger — by a professional mendicant — will you tell me why this remarkable murderer follows the road which passes in front of the victim's house — a road on which he would find no resources — a road on which houses are met with only at intervals of two or three miles — when there is, close at hand,

another road which runs through various villages and passes numbers of farmhouses, in which it is a tradition never to refuse hospitality to one of his kind? One word more. Why does this vagrant steal family papers which will betray him as the criminal the very first time he comes into contact with the police? No, gentlemen, the criminal is not a vagrant. If you want to find him, you must not look for a man wandering along the highway; you must look for him among those relatives or debtors or friends, who had an interest in his death.

VAGRET. This is very true.

BUNERAT. I call that admirably logical and extremely lucid.

MOUZON. Believe me, the matter is quite simple. If I were intrusted with the examination, I guarantee that within three days the criminal would be under lock and key.

VAGRET. Well, my dear colleague, I have a piece of news for you. Monsieur Delorme, who is very unwell, has returned me his brief this afternoon, and it will be intrusted to you. Henceforth the preliminary examination of the Irissary murder will be in your hands.

MOUZON. I have only to say that I accept. My duty is to obey. I withdraw nothing of what I have said; within three days the murderer will be arrested.

BUNERAT. Bravo!

VAGRET. I thank you for that promise in the name of all concerned. I declare that you relieve us of a great anxiety. [*To his wife*] Listen, my dear. Monsieur Mouzon is undertaking the preliminary examination, and he promises us a result before three days are up.

MADAME VAGRET. We shall be grateful, Monsieur Mouzon.

MADAME BUNERAT. Oh, thank you!

VAGRET. Bertha! Tell them to serve dinner — and

to send up that old Irrouleguy wine! I will drink to your success, my dear fellow.

THE MANSERVANT. Dinner is served.

The gentlemen offer their arms to the ladies preparatory to going in to dinner.

CURTAIN.

ACT II

In the office of Mouzon, the examining magistrate. A door at the back and in the wall to the right. On the left are two desks. Portfolios, armchairs, and one ordinary chair.

SCENE I: — *The recorder, then the doorkeeper, then Mouzon. When the curtain rises the recorder, seated in the magistrate's armchair, is drinking his coffee. The doorkeeper enters.*

RECORDER. Ah! Here 's our friend the doorkeeper of the courthouse! Well, what 's the news?

DOORKEEPER. Here 's your boss.

RECORDER. Already!

DOORKEEPER. He got back from Bordeaux last night. Fagged out he looked.

RECORDER [*loftily*] A Mauleon magistrate is always fatigued when he returns from Bordeaux!

DOORKEEPER. Why?

RECORDER [*after a pause*] I do not know.

DOORKEEPER. It 's the Irissary murder that has brought him here so early.

RECORDER. Probably. [*While speaking he arranges his cup, saucer, sugar basin, etc., in a drawer. He then goes to his own place, the desk at the back. Mouzon enters. The doorkeeper pretends to have completed some errand and leaves the room. The recorder rises, with a low bow*] Good-morning, your worship.

MOUZON. Good-morning. You have n't made any engagements, have you, except in the case of the Irissary murder?

RECORDER. I have cited the officer of the gendarmerie, the accused, and the wife of the accused.

MOUZON. I am tired, my good fellow. I have a nervous headache! Any letters for me?

RECORDER. No, your worship.

MOUZON. His Honor the State Attorney has n't asked for me?

RECORDER. No, your worship. But all the same I have something for you. [*He hands him an envelope*]

MOUZON [*opening the envelope*] Stamps for my collection! I say, Benoît, that 's good! Now let 's see. Let 's see. [*He unlocks the drawer of his desk and takes out a stamp album*] Uruguay. I have it! Well, it will do to exchange. And this one too. Oh! Oh! I say, Benoît! A George Albert, first edition! But where did you get this, my dear fellow?

RECORDER. A solicitor's clerk found it in a brief.

MOUZON. Splendid! I must stick that in at once! Pass me the paste, will you? [*He delicately trims the edges of the stamp with a pair of scissors and pastes it in the album with the greatest care, while still talking*] It is rare, extremely rare! According to the *Philatelist* it will exchange for three blue Amadei or a '67 Khedive, obliterated. There! [*Turning over the leaves of his album*] Really, you know, it begins to look something like. It 's beginning to fill up, eh? You know I believe I shall soon be able to get that Hayti example. Look! See here! [*In great delight*] There 's a whole page-full! And all splendid examples. [*He closes the album and sighs*] O Lord!

RECORDER. You don't feel well?

MOUZON. It 's not that. I was rather worried at Bordeaux.

RECORDER. About your stamps?

MOUZON. No, no. [*A sigh to himself*] Damn the women! The very thing I did n't want. [*He takes*

his album again] When I 've got that Hayti specimen I shall need only three more to fill this page too. Yes. [*He closes the album*] Well, what 's the post? Ah! Here is the information from Paris in respect of the woman Etchepare and her husband's judicial record. [*The doorkeeper enters with a visiting-card*] Who is coming to disturb me now? [*More agreeably, having read the name*] Ah! Ah! [*To the recorder*] I shall see him alone.

RECORDER. Yes, your worship. [*He goes out*]

MOUZON [*to the doorkeeper*] Show him in. [*He hides his album, picks up a brief, and affects to be reading it with the utmost attention*]

SCENE II: — *Enter Mondoubleau.*

MONDOUBLEAU [*speaking with a strong provincial accent*] I was passing the Law Courts, and I thought I 'd look in and say how do. I am not disturbing you, I hope?

MOUZON [*smiling and closing his brief*] My dear deputy, an examining magistrate, as you know, is always busy. But it gives one a rest — it does one good — to see a welcome caller once in a while. Sit down, I beg you. Yes, please!

MONDOUBLEAU. I can stop only a minute.

MOUZON. But that 's unkind of you!

MONDOUBLEAU. Well, what 's the latest about the Irissary murder?

MOUZON. So far there 's nothing new. I 've questioned the accused — an ugly-looking fellow and a poor defence. He simply denied everything and flew into a temper. I had to send him back to the cells without getting anything out of him.

MONDOUBLEAU. Are you perfectly sure you 've got the right man?

MOUZON. Certain — no; but I should be greatly surprised if I were mistaken.

MONDOUBLEAU. I saw Monsieur Delorme yesterday. He 's a little better.

MOUZON. So I hear. He thinks the murderer was a tramp. Now there, my dear sir, is one of the peculiarities to which we examining magistrates are subject. We always find it the very devil to abandon the first idea that pops into our minds. Personally I do my best to avoid what is really a professional failing. I am just going to examine Etchepare, and I am waiting for the results of a police inquiry. If all this gives me no result, I shall set the man at liberty and look elsewhere for the culprit — but I repeat, I firmly believe I am on the right scent.

MONDOUBLEAU. Monsieur Delorme is a magistrate of long experience and a very shrewd one, and I will not deny that the reasons he has given me are —

MOUZON. I know my colleague is extremely intelligent. And, once more, I don't say that he 's wrong. We shall see. At present I am only morally certain. I shall be materially certain when I know the antecedents of the accused and have established an obvious motive for his action. At the moment of your arrival I was about to open my mail. Here is a letter from the Court of Pau; it gives our man's judicial record. [*He takes a paper-knife in order to open the envelope*]

MONDOUBLEAU. A curious paper-knife.

MOUZON. That? It 's the blade of the knife that brought the pretty Toulouse woman to the guillotine at Bordeaux. Pretty weapon, eh? I had it made into a paper-knife. [*He opens the envelope*] There — there you are! Four times sentenced for assaulting and wounding. You see —

MONDOUBLEAU. Really, really! Four times!

MOUZON. This is getting interesting. Besides this

— I have neglected nothing — I have learned that his wife, Yanetta Etchepare —

MONDOUBLEAU. Is that the young woman I saw in the corridor just now?

MOUZON. I have called her as witness. I shall be hearing her directly.

MONDOUBLEAU. She looks a very respectable woman.

MOUZON. Possibly. But, as I was about to tell you, I have learned that she used to live in Paris — before her marriage — I have written asking for information. Here we are. [*He opens the envelope and smiles*] Aha! Well, this young woman who looks so respectable was sentenced to one month's imprisonment for receiving stolen goods. Now we will hear the police lieutenant who is coming, very obligingly, to give me an account of the inquiry with which I intrusted him, and which he will put in writing this evening. I shall soon see —

MONDOUBLEAU. Do you suppose he will have anything new for you?

MOUZON. Does this interest you? I will see him in your presence. [*He goes to the door and makes a sign. He returns to his chair*] Understand, I assert nothing. It is quite possible that my colleague's judgment has been more correct than mine. [*The officer enters*]

SCENE III: — *The same and the officer.*

OFFICER. Good-morning, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Good-morning, lieutenant. You can speak before this gentleman.

OFFICER [*saluting*] Our deputy —

MOUZON. Well?

OFFICER. Yes! He 's the man!

MOUZON [*after a glance at Mondoubleau*] Don't let 's go too fast. On what grounds do you make that assertion?

OFFICER. You will see. In the first place there have been four convictions already.

MOUZON. I know.

OFFICER. Then fifteen years ago he bought, from Daddy Goyetche, the victim, a vineyard, the payment taking the form of a life annuity.

MOUZON. Well!

OFFICER. He professed to have made a very bad bargain, and he used to abuse old Goyetche as a swindler.

MOUZON. Excellent!

OFFICER. Five years ago he sold this vineyard.

MOUZON. So that for five years he has been paying an annuity to the victim, although the vineyard was no longer his property.

OFFICER. Yes, your worship.

MOUZON. Go on.

OFFICER. After his arrest people's tongues were loosened. His neighbors have been talking.

MOUZON. That 's always the way.

OFFICER. I have heard a witness, the girl Gracieuse Mendione, to whom Etchepare used the words, " It is really too stupid to be forced to pay money to that old swine."

MOUZON. Wait a moment. You say the girl Gracieuse?

OFFICER. Mendione.

MOUZON [*writing*] Mendione — " It is really too stupid to be forced to pay money to that old swine." Good! Good! Well?

OFFICER. I have another witness, Piarrech Artola.

MOUZON [*writing*] Piarrech Artola.

OFFICER. Etchepare told him, about two months ago, in speaking of old Goyetche, " It 's more than one can stand — the Almighty 's forgotten him."

MOUZON [*writing*] "The Almighty has forgotten him." Excellent. Is this all you can tell me?

OFFICER. Almost all.

MOUZON. At what date should Etchepare have made the next annual payment to old Goyetche?

OFFICER. A week after Ascension Day.

MOUZON. That is a week after the crime?

OFFICER. Yes, your worship.

MOUZON [*to Mondoubleau*] Singular coincidence! [*To the officer*] Was he comfortably off, this Etchepare?

OFFICER. He was pressed for money. Three months ago he borrowed eight hundred francs from a Mauleon cattle-dealer.

MOUZON. And what do the neighbors say?

OFFICER. They say Etchepare was a sly grasping fellow, and they are n't surprised to hear that he 's the murderer. All the same, they all speak very highly of the woman Yanetta Etchepare. They say she is a model mother and housekeeper.

MOUZON. How many children?

OFFICER. Two — Georges and — I can't remember the name of the other now.

MOUZON. And the woman's moral character?

OFFICER. Irreproachable.

MOUZON. Good.

OFFICER. I was forgetting. One of my men, one of those who effected the arrest, informs me that when Etchepare saw him coming he said to his wife, "They 've got me."

MOUZON. "They 've got me." That is rather important.

OFFICER. And then he told his wife, in Basque, "Don't for the world let out that I left the house last night!"

MOUZON. He said this before the gendarme?

OFFICER. No, your worship — the gendarme was outside — close to an open window. Etchepare did n't see him.

MOUZON. You will have him cited as witness.

OFFICER. Yes, your worship. Then there 's that witness for the defence too — Bridet.

MOUZON. Ah, yes — I have read the deposition he made in your presence. It 's of no importance. Still, if he 's there I 'll hear him. Thank you. Well, draw up a report for me, in full detail, and make them give you the summonses for the witnesses.

OFFICER. Yes, your worship. [*He salutes and goes out*]

SCENE IV: — *Mouzon and Mondoubleau.*

MONDOUBLEAU. Monsieur Delorme is a fool.

MOUZON [*laughing*] Well, I don't say so, my dear deputy.

MONDOUBLEAU. It 's wonderful, your faculty of divination.

MOUZON. Wonderful — no, no. I assure you —

MONDOUBLEAU. Now how did you come to suspect this Etchepare?

MOUZON. Well, you know, it is partly a matter of temperament. The searching for a criminal is an art. I may say that a good examining magistrate is guided less by the facts themselves than by a kind of inspiration.

MONDOUBLEAU. Wonderful. I repeat it 's wonderful. And this witness for the defence?

MOUZON. He may be a false witness.

MONDOUBLEAU. What makes you think that?

MOUZON. Because he accuses the gipsies! Moreover, he had business dealings with Etchepare. The Basque, you know, still look on us rather as enemies, as conquerors, and they think it no crime to deceive us by means of a false oath.

MONDOUBLEAU. Then you were never inclined to accept the theory of your predecessor?

MOUZON. Tramps — the poor wretches! I know what an affection you have for the poor, and I feel with you that one should not confine oneself to suspecting the unfortunate — people without shelter, without bread even.

MONDOUBLEAU. Bravo! I am delighted to find that you are not only an able magistrate, but also that you think with me on political matters.

MOUZON. You are very good.

MONDOUBLEAU. I hope that from now on the Basque newspapers will cease its attacks upon you.

MOUZON. I am afraid not.

MONDOUBLEAU. Come, come!

MOUZON. What can you expect, my dear sir? The paper is hostile to you, and as I do not scruple openly to support your candidature they make the magistrate pay for the opinions of the citizen.

MONDOUBLEAU. I feel ashamed — and I thank you with all my heart, my dear fellow. Go on as you are doing — but be prudent — eh? The Keeper of the Seals was saying to me only a couple of days ago, "I look to you to see that there is no trouble in your constituency. No trouble — above all no scandal of any kind!" I ought to tell you that Eugène is the subject of many attacks at the present moment.

MOUZON. You are on very intimate terms with his Honor the Keeper of the Seals.

MONDOUBLEAU [*makes a gesture, then, simply*] We were in the Commune together.

MOUZON. I see.

MONDOUBLEAU. Tell me, by the way, what sort of a man is your State Attorney?

MOUZON. Monsieur Vagret?

MONDOUBLEAU. Yes.

MOUZON. Oh, well — he 's a very painstaking magistrate, very exact —

MONDOUBLEAU. No, I mean as to his political opinions.

MOUZON. You must n't blame him for being in the political camp of those who are diametrically opposed to us. At all events, don't run away with the idea that he is a mischievous person.

MONDOUBLEAU. Narrow-minded. [*He has for some little time been gazing at Mouzon's desk*] I see you 've got the Labastide brief on your table. There 's nothing in it at all. I know Labastide well; he 's one of my ablest electoral agents; and I assure you he 's absolutely incapable of committing the actions of which he is accused. I told Monsieur Vagret as much, but I see he is prosecuting after all.

MOUZON. I can only assure you, my dear deputy, that I will give the Labastide affair my most particular attention.

MONDOUBLEAU. I have too much respect for you, my dear fellow, to ask more of you. Well, well, I must n't waste your time. So for the present —

MOUZON. Au revoir. [*The deputy goes out. Mouzon is alone*] I don't think our deputy is getting such a bad idea of me. [*Smiling*] The fact is it was really clever of me to suspect Etchepare. Now the thing is to make him confess the whole business, and as quickly as possible —

The doorkeeper enters, a telegram in his hand.

MOUZON. A telegram for me?

DOORKEEPER. Yes, your honor.

MOUZON. Give it me. Right. [*The doorkeeper goes out. Mouzon reads*] "Diane is detained under arrest. The report of yesterday's affair sent to the Attorney-General. — Lucien." That 's nice for me! [*He is silent, pacing to and fro*] Oh, the accursed

women! [*Silence*] Come, I must get to work. [*He goes to the door at the back and calls his recorder*] Benoît!

SCENE V: — *Mouzon, the recorder, and then Bridet.*

MOUZON [*seated, gives a brief to the recorder*] Make out an order of non-lieu in the Labastide case and the order for his immediate release. You can do that during the interrogatories. Now, let us begin! It is two o'clock already and we have done nothing. Make haste — Let 's see — What are you waiting for? Give me the list of witnesses — the list of witnesses. Don't you understand? What 's the matter with you to-day? That 's right. Now bring in this famous witness for the defence and let us get rid of him. Is Etchepare there?

RECORDER. Yes, your honor.

MOUZON. His wife too?

RECORDER. Yes, your honor.

MOUZON. Well, then! What 's the matter with you that you look at me like that? Bring him in.

RECORDER. Which first? Etchepare?

MOUZON. No! — the witness for the defence. The wit-ness for the de-fence — do you understand?

RECORDER [*outside, angrily*] Bridet! Come, Bridet, are you deaf? Come in! [*Roughly*] Stir yourself!

Bridet enters.

BRIDET. Your worship, I am going to tell you —

MOUZON. Hold your tongue. You will speak when you are questioned. Name, surname, age, profession, and place of domicile.

BRIDET. Bridet, Jean-Pierre, thirty-eight, maker of *alpargates* at Faigorry.

MOUZON [*in a single breath*] You swear to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Say,

"I swear." You are neither a blood relative nor a relation by marriage of the accused, you are not in his service and he is not in yours. [*To the recorder*] Has he said, "I swear"?

RECORDER. Yes, your worship.

MOUZON [*to Bridet*] Speak! [*Silence*] Go on — speak!

BRIDET. I am waiting for you to ask me questions.

MOUZON. Just now one could n't keep you quiet; now when I ask you to speak you have nothing to say. What interest have you in defending Etchepare?

BRIDET. What interest?

MOUZON. Yes. Don't you understand your own language?

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur. Why, no interest.

MOUZON. No interest? Is that the truth? Eh? None? Come, I want very much to believe you. [*Very sternly*] However, I remind you that Article 361 of the Penal Code punishes false evidence with imprisonment. Now that you know the risk you run in not telling the truth I will listen to you.

BRIDET [*confused*] I was going to say that old Goyetche was murdered by gipsies who came from over the frontier, down the mountain.

MOUZON. You are sure of that?

BRIDET. I believe it 's so.

MOUZON. You are not here to say what you believe. Tell me what you saw or heard. That is all that 's asked of you.

BRIDET. But one 's always meeting them, these gipsies. The other day they robbed a tobacconist's shop. There were three of them. Two of them went inside. I must tell you they had looked the place over during the day —

MOUZON. Did you come here to laugh at the law? Eh?

BRIDET. I? — But, Monsieur —

MOUZON. I ask if you came here to mock at the law?

BRIDET. No, Monsieur.

MOUZON. That 's as well, for such a thing won't answer — you understand? Do you hear?

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Is that all you have to say?

BRIDET. No, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Well, then, go on! Confound it! Don't waste my time in this way! Do you think I 've nothing to do but listen to your gossip? Come now, tell me.

BRIDET. Well, the day after Ascension Day — that is, on the Monday — no, on the Friday —

MOUZON. Was it Monday or Friday?

BRIDET. Friday — it was like a Monday, you see, because it was the day after the holiday. Well, the day they found old Goyetche murdered I saw a troop of gipsies leaving his house.

MOUZON. Then you were quite close to the house?

BRIDET. No, I was passing on the road.

MOUZON. Did they close the door behind them?

BRIDET. I don't know, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Then why do you say you saw them come out of the house?

BRIDET. I saw them come out of the meadow in front of the house.

MOUZON. And then?

BRIDET. That 's all.

MOUZON [*throwing himself back in his chair*] And you 've come here to bother me for this, eh? Answer. For this?

BRIDET. But, your worship — I beg your pardon — I thought — I beg your pardon —

MOUZON. Listen. How many gipsies were there? Think well. Don't make a mistake.

BRIDET. Five.

MOUZON. Are you certain of that?

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Yes. Well, in the presence of the gendarmes you said there were five or six. So you are more certain of a fact at the end of a month than you were on the day on which you observed it. On the other hand, you no longer know whether the fact occurred on a Monday or a Friday, nor whether the gipsies were leaving the house or merely crossing the fields. [*Sternly*] Tell me, are you acquainted with the accused? Etchepare — do you know him?

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. You have business relations with him? You used to sell him sheep?

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. That's enough for me. Get out!

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. And think yourself lucky that I let you go like this.

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. In future, before asking to be heard as a witness for the defence in a trial at law, I recommend you to think twice.

BRIDET. Rest your mind easy, Monsieur. I swear they'll never get me again!

MOUZON. Sign your interrogatory and be off. If there were not so many easy-going blunderers of your sort, there would be less occasion to complain of the law's delays and hesitations for which the law itself is not responsible.

BRIDET. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON [*to the recorder*] Send for Etchepare.

RECORDER [*returning immediately*] Your worship.

MOUZON. Well?

RECORDER. The advocate — Maître Plaçat.

MOUZON. Is he there?

RECORDER. Yes, your honor. He would like to see you before the interrogatory.

MOUZON. Well, show him in, then! What are you waiting for? Be off — and come back when I send for the accused.

The recorder goes out as Plaçat enters.

SCENE VI: — *Mouzon, Maître Plaçat.*

MOUZON. Good-day, my dear fellow — how are you?

PLAÇAT. Fine. And you? I caught sight of you last night at the Grand Theatre; you were with an extremely charming woman.

MOUZON. Ah, yes — I — er —

PLAÇAT. I beg your pardon. Tell me now — I wanted to have a word with you about the Etchepare case.

MOUZON. If you are free at the present moment, we are going to hold the examination at once.

PLAÇAT. That 's the trouble — I have n't a minute.

MOUZON. Would you like us to postpone it until to-morrow?

PLAÇAT. No, no — I have just been speaking to the accused. An uninteresting story. He just keeps on denying — that 's all. He agreed to be interrogated without me. [*Laughing*] I won't hide from you that I advised him to persist in his method. Well, then, au revoir. If he wants an advocate later on, let me know — I 'll send you one of my secretaries.

MOUZON. Right. Good-bye for the present, then.

He returns to his desk. The recorder enters, then Etchepare, between two gendarmes.

SCENE VII: — *Mouzon, Etchepare, the recorder.*

RECORDER. Step forward.

MOUZON [*to the recorder*] Recorder, write. [*Very quickly, stuttering*] In the year nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, etc. Before me, Mouzon, examining magistrate, in the presence of — and so on — the Sieur Etchepare Jean-Pierre was brought to our office, his first appearance being recorded in the report of — and so on. We may mention that the accused, having consented to interrogation in the absence of his advocate — [*To Etchepare*] You do consent, don't you?

ETCHEPARE. I am innocent. I don't need any advocate.

MOUZON [*resumes his stuttering*] We dispensed therewith. In consequence of which we have immediately proceeded as below to the interrogation of the said Sieur Etchepare Jean-Pierre. [*To Etchepare*] Etchepare, on the occasion of your first appearance you refused to reply, which was n't perhaps very sensible of you, but you were within your rights. You lost your temper and I was even obliged to remind you of the respect due to the law. Are you going to speak to-day?

ETCHEPARE [*disturbed*] Yes, your worship.

MOUZON. Ah! Aha! my fine fellow, you are not so proud to-day!

ETCHEPARE. No. I 've been thinking. I want to get out of this as quickly as possible.

MOUZON. Well, well, for my part, I ask nothing more than to be able to set you at liberty. So far we understand each other excellently. Let us hope it 'll last. Sit down. And first of all I advise you to give up trying to father the crime onto a band of gipsies. The witness Bridet, who has business rela-

tions with you, has endeavored, no doubt at your instigation, to induce us to accept this fable. I warn you he has not succeeded.

ETCHEPARE. I don't know what Bridet may have told you.

MOUZON. Oh! You deny it? So much the better! Come, you are cleverer than I thought! Was it you who murdered Goyetche?

ETCHEPARE. No, Monsieur.

MOUZON. You had an interest in his death?

ETCHEPARE. No, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Oh, really! I thought you had to pay him a life annuity.

ETCHEPARE [*after a moment's hesitation*] Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Then you had an interest in his death? [*Silence*] Eh! You don't answer? Well, let us continue. You said to a witness, the young woman — the young woman Gracieuse Mendione — "It is really too stupid to be forced to pay money to that old swine."

ETCHEPARE [*without conviction*] That's not true.

MOUZON. It's not true! So the witness is a liar, eh?

ETCHEPARE. I don't know.

MOUZON. You don't know. [*A pause*] You thought that Goyetche had lived too long?

ETCHEPARE. No, Monsieur.

MOUZON. No, Monsieur. Then why did you say to another witness, Piarrech Artola, why did you say, in speaking of your creditor, "It's too much, the Almighty has forgotten him"?

ETCHEPARE. I didn't say that.

MOUZON. You didn't say that. So this witness is a liar too! Answer me. Is he a liar? [*Silence*] You don't answer. It's just as well. Come now, Etchepare, why do you persist in these denials — eh? Isn't

it all plain enough? You are avaricious, interested, greedy for gain —

ETCHEPARE. It 's so hard to make a living.

MOUZON. You are a man of violent temper — from time to time you get drunk, and then you become dangerous. You have been four times convicted for assault and wounding — you are over-ready with your knife. Is that the truth or is n't it? You were tired of paying — for nothing — a biggish annual sum to this old man. The time for payment was approaching; you were pressed for money; you felt that Goyetche had lived too long, and you killed him. It 's so obvious — eh? Is n't it true?

ETCHEPARE [*gradually recovering himself*] I did not murder him.

MOUZON. We won't juggle with words. Did you pay anyone else to kill him?

ETCHEPARE. I had nothing to do with his death. You yourself say I was pressed for money. So how could I have paid anyone to kill him?

MOUZON. Then you did it yourself.

ETCHEPARE. That 's a lie.

MOUZON. Listen, Etchepare — you will confess sooner or later. Already you are weakening in your defence.

ETCHEPARE. If I was to shout, you 'd say I was play-acting.

MOUZON. I tell you sooner or later you will change your tune. Already you admit facts which constitute a serious charge against you.

ETCHEPARE. That 's true; I said it without thinking of the consequences.

MOUZON. Ah, but you ought to think of the consequences; for they may be peculiarly serious for you.

ETCHEPARE. I 'm not afraid of death.

MOUZON. The death of others —

ETCHEPARE. Nor my own.

MOUZON. So much the better. But you are a Basque; you are a Catholic. After death there is hell.

ETCHEPARE. I 'm not afraid of hell; I 've done nothing wrong.

MOUZON. There is the dishonor that will fall on your children. You love your children, do you not? Eh? They will ask after you — they love you — because they don't know — yet —

ETCHEPARE [*suddenly weeping*] My poor little children! My poor little children!

MOUZON. Come, then! All good feeling is n't extinct in you. Believe me, Etchepare, the jury will be touched by your confession, by your repentance — you will escape the supreme penalty. You are still young — you have long years before you in which to expiate your crime. You may earn your pardon and perhaps you may once again see those children, who will have forgiven you. Believe me — believe me — in your own interests even, confess! [*Mouzon has approached Etchepare during the foregoing; he places his hands on the latter's shoulders; he continues, with great gentleness*] Come, is n't it true? If you can't speak, you 've only to nod your head. Eh? It 's true? Come, since I know it 's true. Eh? I can't hear what you say. It was you, was n't it? It was you!

ETCHEPARE [*still weeping*] It was not me, sir! I swear it was not me! I swear it!

MOUZON [*in a hard voice, going back to his desk*] Oh, you need n't swear. You have only to tell me the truth.

ETCHEPARE. I am telling the truth — I am — I can't say I did it when I did n't!

MOUZON. Come, come! We shall get nothing out of you to-day. [*To the recorder*] Read him his in-

terrogatory and let him be taken back to his cell. One minute — Etchepare!

ETCHEPARE. Monsieur?

MOUZON. There is one way to prove your innocence, since you profess to be innocent. Prove, in one way or another, that you were elsewhere than at Irissary on the night of the crime, and I will set you at liberty. Where were you?

ETCHEPARE. Where was I?

MOUZON. I ask you where you were on the night of Ascension Day. Were you at home?

ETCHEPARE. Yes.

MOUZON. Is that really the truth?

ETCHEPARE. Yes.

MOUZON [*rising, rather theatrically, pointing at Etchepare*] Now, Etchepare, that condemns you. I know that you went out that night. When you were arrested you said to your wife, "Don't for the world admit that I went out last night." Come, I must tell you everything. Someone saw you — a servant. She told the gendarmes that as she was saying good-night to a young man from Iholdy, with whom she had been dancing, at ten o'clock at night, she saw you a few hundred yards from your house. What have you to say to that?

ETCHEPARE. It is true — I did go out.

MOUZON [*triumphantly*] Ah! Now, my good man, we've had some trouble in getting you to say something. But I can read it in your face when you are lying — I can read it in your face in letters as big as that. The proof is that there was no witness who saw you go out — neither your servant nor anyone else; and yet I would have sworn to it with my head under the knife. Come, we have made a little progress now. [*To the recorder*] Have you put down carefully his first admission? Good. [*To Etchepare*] Now think

for a moment. We will continue our little conversation. [*He goes towards the fireplace, rubbing his hands, pours himself a glass of spirits, swallows it, gives a sigh of gratification, and returns to his chair*]

First Gendarme [*to his comrade*] A cunning one, he is!

Second Gendarme. You 're right!

Mouzon. Let us continue. Come, now that you 've got so far, confess the whole thing! Here are these good gendarmes who want to go to their grub. [*The gendarmes, the recorder, and Mouzon laugh*] You confess? No? Then tell me, why did you insist on saying that you remained at home that night?

Etchepare. Because I 'd told the gendarmes so and I did n't want to make myself out a liar.

Mouzon. And why did you tell the gendarmes that?

Etchepare. Because I thought they 'd arrest me on account of the smuggling.

Mouzon. Good. Then you did n't go to Irissary that night?

Etchepare. No.

Mouzon. Where did you go?

Etchepare. Up the mountain, to look for a horse that had got away the night before, one of a lot we were taking to Spain.

Mouzon. Good. Excellent. That is n't badly thought out — that can be maintained. You went to look for a horse lost on the mountain, a horse which escaped from a lot you were smuggling over the frontier on the previous night. Excellent. If that is true, there is nothing for it but to set you at liberty before we are much older. Now to prove that you 've simply to tell me to whom you sold the horse; we shall send for the purchaser, and if he confirms your statement, I will sign your discharge. To whom did you sell the horse?

Etchepare. I did n't sell it.

MOUZON. You gave it away? You did something with it!

ETCHEPARE. No — I did n't find it again.

MOUZON. You did n't find it again! The devil! That 's not so good. Come! Let 's think of something else. You did n't go up the mountain all alone?

ETCHEPARE. Yes, all alone.

MOUZON. Bad luck! Another time, you see, you ought to take a companion. Were you out long?

ETCHEPARE. All night. I got in at five in the morning.

MOUZON. A long time.

ETCHEPARE. We are n't well off, and a horse is worth a lot of money.

MOUZON. Yes. But you did n't spend the whole night on the mountain without meeting someone — shepherds or customs officers?

ETCHEPARE. It was raining in torrents.

MOUZON. Then you met no one?

ETCHEPARE. No one.

MOUZON. I thought as much. [*In a tone of disappointed reproach, with apparent pity*] Tell me, Etchepare, do you take the jurymen for idiots? [*Silence*] So that 's all you 've been able to think of? I said you were intelligent just now. I take that back. But think what you 've told me — a rigmarole like that. Why, a child of eight would have done better. It 's ridiculous I tell you — ridiculous. The jurymen will simply shrug their shoulders when they hear it. A whole night out of doors, in the pouring rain, to look for a horse you don't find — and without meeting a living soul — no shepherds, no customs officers — and you go home at five in the morning — although at this time of the year it 's daylight by then — yes, and before then — but no, no one saw you and you saw no one. So everybody was stricken with blindness, eh? A miracle

happened, and everyone was blind that night. You don't ask me to believe that? No? Why not? It's quite as probable as what you do tell me. So everybody was n't blind? [*The recorder bursts into a laugh; the gendarmes imitate him*] You see what it's worth, your scheme of defence! You make the gaolers and my recorder laugh. Don't you agree with me that your new method of defence is ridiculous?

ETCHEPARE [*abashed, under his breath*] I don't know.

MOUZON. Well, if you don't know, we do! Come now! I have no advice to give you. You repeat that at the trial and see what effect you produce. But why not confess? Why not confess? I really don't understand your obstinacy. I repeat, I really do not understand it.

ETCHEPARE. Well, if I did n't do it, am I to say all the same that I did?

MOUZON. So you persist in your story of the phantom horse? You persist in it, do you?

ETCHEPARE. How do I know? How should I know what I ought to say? I should do better not to say anything at all — everything I say is turned against me!

MOUZON. Because the stories you invent are altogether too improbable — because you think me more of a fool than I am in thinking that I am going to credit such absurd inventions. I preferred your first method; at least you had two witnesses to speak for you — two witnesses who were not worth very much, it's true, but witnesses all the same. You've made a change; well, you are within your rights. Let us stick to the lost horse.

ETCHEPARE. Well, then? [*A long pause*]

MOUZON. Come! Out with it!

ETCHEPARE [*without emphasis, hesitation, gazing at the recorder as though to read in his eyes whether he was*

replying as he should] Well, I 'm going to tell you, Monsieur. You are right — it is n't true — I did n't go up into the mountain. What I said first of all was the truth — I did n't go out at all. Just now I was all muddled. At first I denied everything, even what was true — I was so afraid of you. Then, when you told me — I don't remember what it was — my head 's all going like — I don't know — I don't remember — but all the same I know I am innocent. Well, just now, I almost wished I could admit I was guilty if only you 'd leave me in peace. What was I saying? I don't remember. Ah, yes — when you told me — whatever it was, I 've forgotten — it seemed to me I 'd better say I 'd gone out — and I told a lie. But [*sincerely*] what I swear to you is that I am not the guilty man. I swear it, I swear it!

MOUZON. I repeat, I ask nothing better than to be able to believe it. So now it 's understood, is it, that you were at home?

ETCHEPARE. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. We shall hear your wife directly. You have no other witnesses to call?

ETCHEPARE. No, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Good. Take the accused away — but remain in the Court. I shall probably need him directly for a confrontation. His interrogatory is n't finished.

.. *The gendarmes lead Etchepare away.*

SCENE VIII: — *Mouzon and the recorder.*

MOUZON [*to the recorder*] What a rogue, eh? One might have taken him in the act, knife in hand, and he 'd say it was n't true! A crafty fellow too — he defends himself well.

RECORDER. I really thought, at one time, that your worship had got him.

MOUZON. When I was speaking of his children?

RECORDER. Yes, that brought tears to one's eyes. It made one feel one wanted to confess even though one had n't done anything!

MOUZON. Did n't it? Ah, if I had n't got this headache! [*A pause*] I did a stupid thing just now.

RECORDER. Oh, your worship!

MOUZON. I did. I was wrong to show him how improbable that new story of his was. It is so grotesque that it would have betrayed him — while, if he goes on asserting that he never left the house, if the servant insists he did n't, and if the wife says the same thing, that 's something that may create a doubt in the mind of the jury. He saw that perfectly, the rascal! He felt that of the two methods the first was the better. That 's one against me, my good Benoît. [*To himself*] That must be set right. Let me think. Etchepare is the murderer, there 's no doubt about that. I am as certain of that as if I 'd been present. So he was n't at home on the night of the crime and his wife knows it. After the way he hesitated just now — if I can get the wife to confess that he was absent from home till the morning, we get back to the ridiculous story of the lost horse, and I catch him twice in a flagrant lie, and I 've got him. Come, we must give the good woman a bit of a roasting and get the truth out of her. It 'll be devilish queer if I don't succeed. [*To the recorder*] What did I do with the police record of the woman Etchepare that was sent from Paris?

RECORDER. It 's in the brief.

MOUZON. Yes — here it is — the extract from her judicial record. Report number two, a month of imprisonment, for receiving — could n't be better. Send her in.

The recorder goes to the door and calls.

RECORDER. Yanetta Etchepare!

Enter Yanetta.

SCENE IX: — *Mouzon, recorder, Yanetta.*

MOUZON. Step forward. Now, Madame, I shall not administer the oath to you, since you are the wife of the accused. But none the less I beg you most urgently to tell the truth. I warn you that an untruth on your part might compel me to accuse you of complicity with your husband in the crime of which he is accused and force me to have you arrested at once.

YANETTA. I 'm not afraid. I can't be my husband's accomplice because my husband is n't guilty.

MOUZON. That is not my opinion. I will say further: you know a great deal more about this matter than you care to tell.

YANETTA. I? That 's infamous.

MOUZON. Come, come, no shouting! I don't say you took a direct part in the murder. I say it is highly probable that you knew of the murder, perhaps advised it, and that you have profited by it. That would be enough to place you in the dock beside your husband at the assizes. My treatment of you will depend on the sincerity of your answers to my questions. As you do or do not tell me the truth I shall either set you at liberty or have you arrested. Now you can't say that I have n't warned you! And now, if you please, inform me whether you persist in your first statement, in which you affirm that Etchepare stopped at home on the night of Ascension Day.

YANETTA. I do.

MOUZON. Well, it is untrue.

YANETTA [*excited*] The night on which Daddy Goyetche was murdered my husband never left the house.

MOUZON. I tell you that is not the truth.

YANETTA [*as before*] The night Daddy Goyetche was murdered my husband never left the house.

MOUZON. You seem to have got stuck. You go on repeating the same thing.

YANETTA. Yes, I go on repeating the same thing.

MOUZON. Well, now let us examine into the value of your evidence. Since your marriage — for the last ten years — your conduct has left nothing to be desired. You are thrifty, faithful, industrious, honest —

YANETTA. Well?

MOUZON. Wait a moment. You have two children, whom you adore. You are an excellent mother. One hears of your almost heroic behavior at the time your eldest child was ill — Georges, I think.

YANETTA. Yes, it was Georges. But what has that to do with the charge against my husband?

MOUZON. Have patience. You will see presently.

YANETTA. Very well.

MOUZON. It is all the more to your credit that you are what you are, for your husband does not give us an example of the same virtues. He occasionally gets drunk.

YANETTA. No, he does n't.

MOUZON. Come — everyone knows that. He is violent.

YANETTA. He 's not violent.

MOUZON. So violent that he has been convicted four times for assault and battery.

YANETTA. That 's possible; at holiday times, in the evening, men get quarrelling. But that was a long time ago. Now he behaves better, and I 'm very happy with him.

MOUZON. That surprises me.

YANETTA. Anyhow, does that prove he murdered old Goyetche?

MOUZON. Your husband is very grasping.

YANETTA. Poor people are forced to be very grasping or else to die of starvation.

MOUZON. You defend him well.

YANETTA. Did you suppose I was going to accuse him?

MOUZON. Have you ever been convicted?

YANETTA [*anxious*] Me?

MOUZON. Yes, you.

YANETTA [*weakly*] No, I 've never been convicted.

MOUZON. That is curious, because there was a girl of your name in Paris who was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for receiving stolen property.

YANETTA [*weakly*] For receiving stolen property —

MOUZON. You are not quite so bold now — you are disturbed.

YANETTA [*as before*] No —

MOUZON. You are pale — you are trembling — you are feeling faint. Give her a chair, Benoît. [*The recorder obeys*] Pull yourself together!

YANETTA. My God, you know that?

MOUZON. Here is the report which has been sent me. "The woman Yanetta X— was brought to Paris at the age of sixteen as companion or lady's maid by Monsieur and Madame So-and-so, having been employed by them in that capacity at Saint-Jean-de-Luz." Is that correct?

YANETTA. Yes.

MOUZON. Here is some more. "Illicit relations were before long formed between the girl Yanetta and the son of the family, who was twenty-three years of age. Two years later the lovers fled, taking with them eight thousand francs which the young man had stolen from his father. On the information of the latter the girl Yanetta was arrested and condemned to one month's imprisonment for receiving stolen property. After serving her sentence she disappeared. It is believed that she returned to her own district." Are you the person mentioned here?

YANETTA. Yes. My God, I thought that was all so long ago — so completely forgotten. It is all true, Monsieur, but for ten years now I 've given every minute of my life to making up for it, trying to redeem myself. Just now I answered you insolently; I beg your pardon. You have not only my life in your hands now, but my husband's, and the honor of my children.

MOUZON. Does your husband know of this?

YANETTA. No, Monsieur. Oh, you are n't going to tell him! I beg you on my knees! It would be wicked, I tell you, wicked! Listen, Monsieur — listen. I came back to the country; I hid myself; I would rather have died; I did n't want to stay in Paris — you understand why — and then in a little while I lost mother. Etchepare was in love with me, and he bothered me to marry him. I refused — I had the courage to go on refusing for three years. Then — I was so lonely, so miserable, and he was so unhappy, that in the end I gave way. I ought to have told him everything. I wanted to, but I could n't. It would have hurt him too much. For he 's a good man, Monsieur, I swear he is. [*Mouzon makes a gesture*] Yes, I know, sometimes when he 's been drinking, he 's violent. I was going to tell you about that. I don't want to tell you any more untruths. But it 's very seldom he 's violent now. [*Weeping*] Oh, don't let him know, Monsieur, don't let him know. He 'd go away — he 'd leave me — he 'd take my children from me. [*She gives a despairing cry*] Ah, he 'd take my children from me! I don't know what to say to you — but it is n't possible — you can't tell him — now you know all the harm it would do. You won't? Of course I was guilty — but I did n't understand — I did n't know. I was n't seventeen, sir, when I went to Paris. My master and mistress had a son; he forced me almost — and I loved him — and

then he wanted to take me away because his parents wanted to send him away by himself. I did what he asked me. That money — I did n't know he had stolen it — I swear I did n't know —

MOUZON. That 's all right; control yourself.

YANETTA. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. We 'll put that on one side for the moment.

YANETTA. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Now your husband —

YANETTA. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON [*with great sincerity*] You will have need of all your courage, my poor woman. Your husband is guilty.

YANETTA. It 's impossible! It 's impossible!

MOUZON [*with great sincerity*] He has not confessed it, but he is on the point of doing so. I myself know what happened that night after he left your house — witnesses have told me.

YANETTA. No! No! My God, my God! Witnesses? What witnesses? It is n't true!

MOUZON. Well, then, don't be so obstinate! In your own interest, don't be so stubborn! Shall I tell you what will be the end of it? You will ruin your husband! If you insist on contradicting the evidence, that he passed the night away from the house, you 'll ruin him, I tell you. On the other hand, if you will only tell me the truth, then if he is not the murderer, he will tell us what he did do and who his companions were.

YANETTA. He had n't any.

MOUZON. Then he went out alone?

YANETTA. Yes.

MOUZON. At ten o'clock?

YANETTA. At ten.

MOUZON. He returned alone at five in the morning?

YANETTA. Yes, all alone.

MOUZON. But perhaps you are thinking of some other night. It was really the night of Ascension Day when he went out alone?

YANETTA. Yes.

MOUZON. Benoît, have you got that written down?

RECORDER. Yes, your worship.

MOUZON. Madame, I know how painful this must be to you, but I beg you to listen to me with the greatest attention. Your husband was pressed for money, was he not?

YANETTA. No.

MOUZON. Yes.

YANETTA. I tell you no.

MOUZON. Here is the proof. Three months ago he borrowed eight hundred francs from a cattle-dealer of Mauleon.

YANETTA. He never told me about it.

MOUZON. Moreover, he owed a considerable sum to Goyetche.

YANETTA. I 've never heard of that either.

MOUZON. Here is an acknowledgment written by your husband. It is in his handwriting?

YANETTA. Yes, but I did n't know —

MOUZON. You did n't know of the existence of this debt? That tends to confirm what I know already — your husband went to Irissary.

YANETTA. No, sir; he tells me everything he does.

MOUZON. But you see very well that he does n't, since you did n't know of the existence of this debt. He went to Irissary. Don't you believe me?

YANETTA. Yes, Monsieur, but he did n't kill a man for money; it 's a lie, a lie, a lie!

MOUZON. It 's a lie! Now how am I to know that? Your husband begins by denying everything, blindly, and then he takes up two methods of defence in suc-

cession. You yourself begin by a piece of false evidence. All this, I tell you again, will do for the man.

YANETTA. I don't know about that, but what I do tell you again is that he did n't kill a man for money.

MOUZON. Then what did he kill him for? Perhaps after all he is n't as guilty as I supposed just now. Perhaps he acted without premeditation. This is what might have happened. Etchepare, a little the worse for drink, goes to Goyetche in order to ask him once more to wait for the payment of this debt. There is a dispute between the two men; old Goyetche was still a strong man; there may have been provocation on his part, and there may have been a struggle, with the tragic result you know of. In that case your husband's position is entirely different — he is no longer a criminal premeditating a crime; and the sentence pronounced against him may be quite a light one. So you see, my good woman, how greatly it is in your interest to obtain a complete confession from him. If he persists in his denials, I am afraid the jury will be extremely severe upon him. There is no doubt that he killed Goyetche; but under what conditions did he kill him? Everything depends on that. By persistently trying to pass for a totally innocent man he risks being thought more guilty than he is. Do you understand?

YANETTA. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON. Will you speak to him as I suggest? Shall I send for him?

YANETTA. Yes, Monsieur.

MOUZON [*to the recorder*] Bring in the accused. Tell the gendarmes I shall not need them.

Etchepare enters.

SCENE X: — *The same, Etchepare.*

YANETTA. Pierre! To see you here — my Pierre — a prisoner — like a thief! My poor husband — my poor husband! Oh, prove you have n't done anything! Tell his worship — tell him the truth. It 'll be best. I beg you tell him the truth.

ETCHEPARE. It 's all no good. I know, I can feel, I 'm done for. All that I can do or say would be no use. Every word I do say turns against me. The gentleman wants me to be guilty. I must be guilty, according to him. So you see! What would you have me do, my poor darling? I 've got no strength to go on struggling against him. Let them do what they like with me; I shan't say anything more.

YANETTA. Yes, yes, you must speak. You must defend yourself. I beg of you, Pierre. I beg of you, defend yourself.

ETCHEPARE. What 's the use?

YANETTA. I beg you to in the name of your children. They don't know anything yet — but they cry because they see me crying — because, you see, I can't hide it, I can't control myself always in front of them. I can't be cheerful, can I? And then they love me, so they notice it. And they ask me questions, questions. If you only knew! They ask me about you. André was asking me again this morning, "Where 's father? Are you going to look for him? Tell me, are you going to fetch him?" I told him "yes" and I ran away. You see you must defend yourself so as to get back to them as soon as possible. If you 've anything to reproach yourself with, even the least thing, tell it. You are rough sometimes — so — I don't know. But if you went to Irissary, you must say so. Perhaps you had a quarrel with the poor old man. If that was it, say so, say so. Perhaps you got fighting together and

you — I 'm saying perhaps you did — I don't know — you understand — but his worship promised me just now that if it was like that they would n't punish you — or not very much. My God, what am I to say to you? What 's to be done?

ETCHEPARE. So you believe I 'm guilty — you too! Tell me now! Do you believe me guilty too?

YANETTA. I don't know! I don't know!

ETCHEPARE [*to Mouzon*] Ah, so you 've managed that too; you 've thought of that too, to torture me through my wife — and it was you put it into her head to speak to me about my children. I don't know what you can have told her, but you 've almost convinced her that I 'm a scoundrel, and you hoped she 'd succeed in sending me to the guillotine in the name of my children, because you know I worship them and they are everything to me. You are right; I dare say there is n't another father living who loves his little ones more than I love mine. [*To Yanetta*] You know that, Yanetta! You know that! And you know too that with all my faults I 'm a true Christian, that I believe in God, in an almighty God. Well, then, listen! My two boys — my little Georges, my little André — I pray God to kill them both if I 'm a criminal!

YANETTA [*with the greatest exultation*] He is innocent! I tell you he 's innocent! I tell you he 's innocent! [*A pause*] Ah, now you can bring your proofs, ten witnesses, a hundred if you like, and you might tell me you saw him do it — I should tell you: It 's not true! It 's not true! You might prove to me that he had confessed to it himself, and I would tell you it was n't true! Oh, you must feel it, your worship. You have a heart — you know what it is when one loves one's children — so you must be certain, you too, that he 's innocent. You are going to give him back to me, are n't you? It 's settled now and you will give him back to me?

MOUZON. If he is innocent, why did he lie just now?

ETCHEPARE. It was you who lied — you! You told me you had witnesses who saw me leave my house that night — and you had n't anyone!

MOUZON. If I had no one at that moment, I have someone now. Yes, there is a witness who has declared that you were not at home on the night of the crime, and that witness is your wife!

ETCHEPARE [*to Yanetta*] You!

MOUZON [*to the recorder*] Give me her interrogatory.

While Mouzon looks through his papers Yanetta gazes for some time at her husband, then at Mouzon. She is reflecting deeply. Finally she seems to have made up her mind.

MOUZON. There. Your wife has just told us that you left the house at ten o'clock and did not return until five in the morning.

YANETTA [*very plainly*] I did not say that. It is not true.

MOUZON. You went on to say that he returned alone.

YANETTA. I did not say that.

MOUZON. I will read your declaration. [*He reads*] Question: Then he went out alone? Reply: Yes. Question: At ten o'clock? Reply: At ten o'clock.

YANETTA. I did not say that.

MOUZON. Come, come! And I was careful to be precise. I said to you, "But perhaps you are thinking of another night? It was really on the night of Ascension Day that he went out alone?" And you replied, "Yes."

YANETTA. It 's not so!

MOUZON. But I have it written here!

YANETTA. You can write whatever you like.

MOUZON. Then I 'm a liar. And the recorder too, he is a liar?

YANETTA. The night old Goyetche was murdered my husband did not leave the house.

MOUZON. You will sign this paper, and at once. It is your interrogatory.

YANETTA. All that is untrue! I tell you it 's untrue! [*Shouting*] The night old Goyetche was murdered my husband never left the house — he never left the house.

MOUZON [*pale with anger*] You will pay for this! [*To the recorder*] Make out immediately an order for the detention of this woman and call the gendarmes. [*To Yanetta*] Woman Etchepare, I place you under arrest on a charge of being accessory to murder. [*To the gendarmes*] Take the man to the cells and return for the woman.

The gendarmes remove Etchepare.

SCENE XI: — *Mouzon, Yanetta, the recorder.*

YANETTA. Ah, you are angry, are n't you — furious — because you have n't got your way! Although you 've done everything, everything you possibly could, short of killing us by inches! You pretend to be kind. You spoke kindly to us. You wanted to make me send my husband to the scaffold! [*Mouzon has taken up his brief and affects to be studying it with indifference*] It 's your trade to supply heads to the guillotine. You must have criminals, guilty men, you must have them at any cost. When a man falls into your clutches he 's a dead man. They come in here innocent and they 've got to go out again guilty. It 's your trade; it 's a matter of vanity with you to succeed! You ask questions which don't seem to mean anything in particular, and yet they may send a man to the next world; and when you 've forced the poor wretch to condemn himself you 're delighted, like a savage would be!

MOUZON [*to the gendarmes*] Take her away — be quick!

YANETTA. Yes, a savage! You call that justice! [*To the gendarmes*] You don't take me like that, I tell you! [*She clings to the furniture*] You 're a butcher! You are as cruel as the people in history who broke one's bones to make one confess! [*The gendarmes have dragged her free; she lets herself fall to the ground and shouts the rest of her speech while the men drag her to the door at the back*] Brute! Savage brute! No, you don't think so — you think yourself a fine fellow, I have n't a doubt, and you 're a butcher —

MOUZON. Take her away, I tell you! What, the two of you can't rid me of that madwoman?

The gendarmes make a renewed effort.

YANETTA. Butcher! Coward! Judas! Pitiless beast! Yes, pitiless, and you are all the more dishonest and brutal when you 've got poor folk like us to do with. [*She is at the door, holding to the frame*] Ah, the brutes, they are breaking my fingers! Yes, the poorer one is the wickeder you are! [*They carry her away. Her cries are still heard as the curtain falls*] The poorer one is the more wicked you are — the poorer one is the more wicked you are —

CURTAIN.

ACT III

The office of the District Attorney. A door to the left, set in a diagonal wall, gives on to a corridor. It opens inwardly, so that the lettering on the outside can be read: "Parquet de Monsieur le Procureur de la République." A desk, chairs, and a chest of drawers.

SCENE I: — *Benoît, La Bouzole. As the curtain rises the recorder is removing various papers from the desk and placing them in a cardboard portfolio. Enter La Bouzole.*

LA BOUZOLE. Good-day, Benoît.

RECORDER [*hesitating to take the hand which La Bouzole extends to him*] Your worship, it 's too great an honor —

LA BOUZOLE. Come, come, Monsieur Benoît, shake hands with me. From to-day I 'm no longer a magistrate; my dignity no longer demands that I shall be impolite to my inferiors. How far have they got with the Etchepare trial?

RECORDER. So far the hearing has been devoted entirely to the indictment and the counsel's address.

LA BOUZOLE. They will finish to-day?

RECORDER. Oh, surely. Even if Monsieur Vagret were to reply, because his Honor the President of Assizes goes hunting to-morrow morning.

LA BOUZOLE. You think it will be an acquittal, Monsieur Benoît?

RECORDER. I do, your worship. [*He is about to go out*]

LA BOUZOLE. Who is the old lady waiting in the corridor?

RECORDER. That is Etchepare's mother, your worship.

LA BOUZOLE. Poor woman! She must be terribly anxious.

RECORDER. No. She is certain of the verdict. She has n't the slightest anxiety. She was there all yesterday afternoon and she came back to-day, just as calm. Only to-day she wanted at any price to see the District Attorney or one of his assistants. Monsieur Ardeuil is away and Monsieur Vagret —

LA BOUZOLE. Is in Court.

RECORDER. She seemed very much put out at finding no one.

LA BOUZOLE. Well, send her in here; perhaps I can give her a little advice. Maître Plaçat will be some time yet, won't he?

RECORDER. I believe so.

LA BOUZOLE. Well, tell her to come and speak to me, poor woman. That won't upset anybody and it may save her some trouble.

RECORDER. Very well, your worship. [*He goes to the door on the right, makes a sign to old Madame Etchepare, and goes out by the door at the back*]

LA BOUZOLE [*alone*] It 's astonishing how benevolent I feel this morning!

Old Madame Etchepare enters, clad in the costume peculiar to old women of Basque race.

SCENE II: — *La Bouzole, Old Madame Etchepare.*

LA BOUZOLE. They tell me, Madame, that you wished to see one of the gentlemen of the Bar.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Yes, sir.

LA BOUZOLE. You wish to be present at the trial?

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. No, sir. I know so well that they cannot condemn my son that what they say in there does n't interest me in the least. I am waiting for him. I have come because they have turned us out of our house.

LA BOUZOLE. They have turned you out?

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. The bailiffs came.

LA BOUZOLE. Then your son owed money?

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Since they arrested him all our men have left us. We could n't get in the crops nor pay what was owing. But of course I know they 'll make all that good when my son is acquitted.

LA BOUZOLE [*aside*] Poor woman!

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. I 'm so thankful to see the end of all our troubles. He 'll come back and get our house and field again for us. He 'll make them give up our cattle. That 's why I wanted to see one of these gentlemen.

LA BOUZOLE. Will you explain?

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. A fortnight after the gendarmes came to arrest my boy, Monsieur Claudet turned the waste water from his factory into the brook that passes our house where we water the beasts. That was one of the things that ruined us too. If Etchepare finds things like that when he gets back, God knows what he 'll do! I want the law to stop them doing us all this harm.

LA BOUZOLE. The law! Ah, my good woman, it would be far better for you to have nothing to do with the law.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. But why? There is justice, and it 's for everybody alike.

LA BOUZOLE. Of course.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Has Monsieur Claudet the right —

LA BOUZOLE. Certainly not.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Then I want to ask the judge to stop him.

LA BOUZOLE. It is not so simple as you suppose, Madame. First of all you must go to the bailiff.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Good.

LA BOUZOLE. He will make a declaration.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. What about?

LA BOUZOLE. He will declare that your water supply is contaminated.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. There is no need to trouble a bailiff, sir. A child could see that.

LA BOUZOLE. It is the law.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Well, and then?

LA BOUZOLE. Then you must go to a lawyer and get a judgment.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Very well, if there 's no other way of doing it —

LA BOUZOLE. That is not all. If Monsieur Claudet contests the facts, the President will appoint an expert who will visit the site and make a report. You will have to put in a request that the President will grant a speedy hearing on grounds of urgency. Your case being finally put on the list of causes, it would be heard in its turn — after the vacations.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. After the vacations!

LA BOUZOLE. And that is not all. Monsieur Claudet's lawyer might default, in which case judgment would be declared in your favor. But Monsieur Claudet might defend the case, or enter some kind of plea and obtain a judgment on that plea, or appeal against the judgment before the matter would be finally settled. All this would cost a great deal of money.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Who would pay it?

LA BOUZOLE. You, naturally, and Monsieur Claudet.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. It 's all one to him; he 's rich; but for us, who have n't a penny left!

LA BOUZOLE. Then you would have to apply for judicial assistance.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. That would take still more time?

LA BOUZOLE. That would take much longer.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. But, sir, I 've always been told that justice was free in France.

LA BOUZOLE. Justice is gratuitous, but the means of obtaining access to justice are not. That is all.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. And all that would take — how long?

LA BOUZOLE. If Monsieur Claudet were to appeal, it might last two years.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. It is n't possible! Is n't the right on my side?

LA BOUZOLE. My poor woman, it 's not enough to have the right on your side — you must have the law on your side too.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. I understand. Justice is a thing we poor people can know only when it strikes us down. We can know it only by the harm it does us. Well — we must go away — it does n't matter where — and I shan't regret it; people insult us; they call out to us as they pass. Etchepare would n't put up with that.

LA BOUZOLE. In that respect the law protects you. Register a complaint and those who insult you will be prosecuted.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. I don't think so. I have already registered a complaint, as you say, but they 've done nothing to the man who injured us. So he goes on.

LA BOUZOLE. Is he an inhabitant of your commune?

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Yes. A neighbor, a friend of Monsieur Mondoubleau, the deputy. Labastide.

LA BOUZOLE. Good. I will do what I can, I promise you.

OLD MADAME ETCHEPARE. Thank you, sir. [*A pause*] Then I will go and wait till they give me back my boy.

LA BOUZOLE. That 's right.

She goes out slowly.

SCENE III: — *La Bouzole, recorder.*

RECORDER [*entering by the door at the back*] The hearing is suspended, your worship.

LA BOUZOLE. Has Maître Plaçat concluded?

RECORDER. With great applause. Two of the jurymen were seen wiping their eyes. No one doubts there will be an acquittal.

LA BOUZOLE. So much the better.

RECORDER. Your worship knows the great news?

LA BOUZOLE. Which?

RECORDER. That the Attorney-General has arrived.

LA BOUZOLE. No — I know nothing of it.

RECORDER. Yes, he has just arrived. It seems he brings the nomination of one of these gentlemen to the post of Councillor in the Court of Appeal.

LA BOUZOLE. Ah, ah! And whose is the prize, in your opinion, Benoît? Vagret's?

RECORDER. That was my opinion. I hesitated a long time between him and his Honor the President, and I decided it would be Monsieur Vagret. But now I think I am wrong.

LA BOUZOLE. Do you think Monsieur Bunerat is appointed?

RECORDER. No, your worship. I feel very proud — I believe it is my employer who has the honor.

LA BOUZOLE. Monsieur Mouzon!

RECORDER. Yes, your worship.

LA BOUZOLE. What makes you think that?

RECORDER. His Honor the Attorney-General requested me to beg Monsieur Mouzon to come and speak to him before the rising of the Court.

LA BOUZOLE. My congratulations, my dear Monsieur Benoît.

Madame Bunerat enters.

SCENE IV: — *The same and later Madame Vagret, Bunerat, the President of Assizes, and Mouzon, then the Attorney-General.*

MADAME BUNERAT [*in tears*] Oh, my dear Monsieur La Bouzole!

LA BOUZOLE. What has happened, Madame Bunerat?

MADAME BUNERAT. It 's that advocate! What talent! What a heart! What feeling! What genius! I feel quite shaken — quite upset —

LA BOUZOLE. It 's an acquittal?

MADAME BUNERAT. They hope so —

MADAME VAGRET [*entering*] Well, my dear Monsieur La Bouzole, you have heard this famous advocate! What a ranter!

LA BOUZOLE. It seems he has touched the jury. That means an acquittal.

MADAME VAGRET. I 'm very much afraid it does.

Enter Bunerat in a black gown.

BUNERAT. Do you know what they tell me? The Attorney-General is here!

MADAME BUNERAT. Really!

MADAME VAGRET. Are you certain?

LA BOUZOLE. It is true enough. He brings Monsieur Mouzon his appointment to the Court of Appeal at Pau.

BUNERAT. Mouzon!

MADAME VAGRET AND MADAME BUNERAT. And my husband! We had a definite promise!

The President of Assizes enters, wearing a red gown.

THE PRESIDENT. Good-day, gentlemen. You have not seen the Attorney-General, have you?

LA BOUZOLE. No, your honor — but if you will wait —

THE PRESIDENT. No. Tell me, La Bouzole — you are an old stager — were you in Court?

LA BOUZOLE. From the balloting for the jurymen to the plea for the defence.

THE PRESIDENT. Did you notice if I let anything pass that would make an appeal to the Court of Cassation possible?

LA BOUZOLE. I am sure you did n't.

THE PRESIDENT. It 's my constant fear — I am thinking of nothing else all the time counsel are speaking. I always have the Manual of the President of Assizes wide open in front of me; I 'm always afraid, nevertheless, of forgetting some formality. You see the effect of being in the Chancellery — I never have a quiet conscience until the time-limit has expired. [*A pause*] They tell me there were journalists here from Toulouse and Bordeaux.

LA BOUZOLE. And one from Paris.

THE PRESIDENT. One from Paris! Are you sure?

LA BOUZOLE. He was standing near the prisoner's bench.

THE PRESIDENT. He was left to stand! A journalist from Paris and he was left to stand! [*Catching sight of the recorder*] You knew that, Monsieur the recorder, and you did n't warn me? Is that how you perform your duties? Go at once and express my regret and find him a good seat; do you hear?

RECORDER. Yes, your honor. [*He turns to go*]

THE PRESIDENT [*running after him*] Here! [*Aside to the recorder*] Find out if he 's annoyed.

RECORDER. Yes, your honor.

THE PRESIDENT. And then — [*He encounters Madame Bunerat at the door. Pardon, Madame. He goes out, running, lifting up his gown*]

LA BOUZOLE. When I was at Montpellier I knew an old tenor who was as anxious as that at his third début —

Enter Mouzon. Frigid salutations.

MADAME BUNERAT [*after a pause*] Is it true, Monsieur Mouzon —

MADAME VAGRET. That the Attorney-General —

BUNERAT. Has arrived?

MOUZON [*haughtily*] Quite true.

BUNERAT. They say he brings a councillor's appointment.

MOUZON. They say so.

MADAME BUNERAT. And you don't know?

MADAME VAGRET. You don't know?

MOUZON. Nothing at all.

BUNERAT. Does nothing lead you to suppose —

MOUZON. Nothing.

RECORDER [*entering*] Here is his Honor the Attorney-General.

MADAME BUNERAT. Oh, Lord!

She arranges her hair. Enter the Attorney-General, a man with handsome, grave, austere features.

ALL [*bowing and cringing, in a murmur*] His Honor the Attorney-General —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I think you can resume the hearing, gentlemen — I am only passing through Mauleon. I hope to return before long and make your better acquaintance.

ALL. Your honor — [*They make ready to leave*]

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Monsieur Mouzon, will you remain?

Mouzon bows.

MADAME VAGRET [*as she goes out*] My respects — the honor — Monsieur —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*bowing*] Mr. President — Madame — Madame —

BUNERAT [*to his wife*] . You see, that 's it!

They go out.

MOUZON [*to the recorder, who is about to leave*] Well, my dear fellow, I believe my appointment is settled.

RECORDER. I am delighted, Monsieur the Councillor! [*Exit*]

SCENE V: — *Mouzon, Attorney-General. Mouzon rubs his hands together, bubbling with joy.*

MOUZON [*obsequiously*] Your honor —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Sit down. [*Mouzon does so*] A report has come to my office from Bordeaux — which concerns you, Monsieur! [*Feeling in his portfolio*] Here it is. [*Reading*] Mouzon and the woman Pecquet. You know what it is?

MOUZON [*not taking the matter seriously, forces a smile. After a long silence*] Yes, your honor —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I am waiting for your explanation.

MOUZON [*as before*] You have been young, your honor —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Not to that extent, Monsieur!

MOUZON. I admit I overstepped the mark a trifle.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*reading*] "Being in a state of intoxication, together with the woman Pecquet and two other women of bad character who accompanied him, the aforesaid Mouzon used insulting and outrageous language to the police, whom he threatened with dismissal." Is that what you call overstepping the mark a trifle?

MOUZON. Perhaps the expression is a little weak.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. And you allow the name of a magistrate to be coupled in a police report with that of the woman Pecquet?

MOUZON. She told me her name was Diane de Montmorency.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*continuing*] "Questioned by us, the commissary of police, on the following morning, as to the rank of officer in the navy which he had assumed" — [*The Attorney-General gazes at Mouzon. Another pause*]

MOUZON [*still smiling*] Yes, it's on account of my whiskers, you know.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Really?

MOUZON. When I — oh, well — when I go to Bordeaux I always assume the rank of naval officer, in order to safeguard the dignity of the law.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. You seem to have been a little tardy in considering it.

MOUZON. I beg you to note, your honor, that I endeavored to safeguard it from the very first, since I took care to go out of the arrondissement and even the judicial division — in order to —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I will continue. "Monsieur Mouzon then informed us of his actual position as examining magistrate, and invoked that quality in requesting that we would stop proceedings."

MOUZON. The ass. He has put that in his report? Oh, really — that's due to his lack of education. No, it's a political affair — the commissary is one of our opponents — I asked him — After all — I wanted to avoid scandal. Anyone would have done the same in my place.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Is that the only explanation you have to give me?

MOUZON. Explanation? The truth is, Monsieur,

that if you insist on maintaining, in this conversation, the relations between a superior and a subordinate, I can give you no further explanation. But if you would be so good as to allow me for a moment to forget your position, if you would agree to talk to me as man to man, I should tell you that this was a fault of youth, regrettable, no doubt, but explained by the profound boredom which exudes from the very paving-stones of Mauleon. Come, come! I had dined too well. Every night of the year a host of decent fellows find themselves in the same case. It 's a pecadillo which does n't affect one's personal honor.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Monsieur, when one has the honor to be a magistrate — when one has accepted the mission of judging one's fellows, one is bound more than all others to observe temperance and to consider one's dignity in all things. What may not affect the honor of the private citizen does affect the honor of the judge. You may take that for granted.

MOUZON. As you refuse to discuss the matter otherwise than in an official manner, nothing remains for me but to beg you to inform me what you have decided to do.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Cannot you guess?

MOUZON. I am an examining magistrate. You will make me an ordinary magistrate. It means my income will be diminished by five hundred francs a year. I accept.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. It is unfortunately impossible for me to content myself with such a simple measure. To speak plainly, I must inform you that Monsieur Coire, the director of the newspaper which attacks us so persistently, is acquainted with the whole of the facts of the accusation brought against you and will not give his word not to publish them unless by the end of the month you have left the Mauleon Court. I

therefore find myself in the unhappy necessity of demanding your resignation.

MOUZON. I shall not resign.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. You will not resign?

MOUZON. I am distressed to oppose any desire of yours, but I am quite decided. I shall not resign.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. But really — you cannot know —

MOUZON. I know everything.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Very well, sir, we shall proceed against you.

MOUZON. Proceed. [*He rises*]

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Are you not alarmed at the scandal which would result from your appearance in court and your probable conviction?

MOUZON. Conviction is less probable than you think. I shall be able to defend myself and to select my advocate. As for the scandal, it would n't fall on me. I am a bachelor, with no family; I know no one or next to no one in Mauleon, where I am really in exile. My friends are all in Bordeaux; they belong to the *monde ou l'on s'amuse*, and I should not in the least lose caste in their eyes on account of such a prosecution. You think I ought to leave the magistracy? Fortunately I have sufficient to live on without the thirty-five hundred francs the Government of the Republic allows me annually.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. That is enough, Monsieur. Good-day.

MOUZON. My respects. [*He goes out*]

DOORKEEPER. Monsieur the deputy is here, your honor. Monsieur the deputy says that your honor is waiting for him.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. That is so. Ask him to come in.

Enter Mondoubleau. The Attorney-General advances towards him and shakes hands with him.

SCENE VI: — *Mondoubleau, Attorney-General.*

MONDOUBLEAU. Good-day, my dear Attorney-General.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Good-day, my dear deputy.

MONDOUBLEAU. I 'm delighted to see you. I 've come from Paris. I had lunch yesterday with my friend the Keeper of the Seals. The Government is badly worried just at the moment.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. About what?

MONDOUBLEAU. They 're afraid of an interpellation. Just a chance — I 'll tell you about it. Tell me — it seems you have a young assistant here who has been playing pranks.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Monsieur Ardeuil?

MONDOUBLEAU. Ardeuil, yes, that 's the man. Eugène follows matters very closely.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Eugène?

MONDOUBLEAU. Eugène — my friend Eugène — the Keeper of the Seals. He said to me, " I expect your Attorney-General to understand how to do his duty."

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I ask nothing better, but let me know what my duty is.

MONDOUBLEAU. That 's just what one wants to avoid. But look here, my friend, you are a very mysterious person!

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I?

MONDOUBLEAU. You are asking for a change of appointment.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Who told you that?

MONDOUBLEAU. Who do you suppose? He is the only one who knows.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Eug — [*Quickly*] The Keeper of the Seals?

MONDOUBLEAU. You want to be appointed to Orléans? Am I correctly informed?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Quite true. We have relations there.

MONDOUBLEAU. I fancy you are concerned in the movement now in preparation.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Is there a movement in preparation?

MONDOUBLEAU. There is. As for Monsieur Ardeuil, the Minister confined himself to saying that he had confidence in your firmness and zeal.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. The Keeper of the Seals may rely on me. I shall have to show considerable severity in several directions here, and I shall lack neither determination nor zeal, I can assure you.

MONDOUBLEAU. Yes, but above all, tact! Eugène repeated a dozen times, "Above all, no prosecutions, no scandals. At the present moment less than ever. We are being watched. So everything must be done quietly."

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. You need n't be alarmed. There 's the matter of Mouzon.

MONDOUBLEAU. Mouzon! Mouzon the examining magistrate!

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Yes.

MONDOUBLEAU. Of Mauleon?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Precisely.

MONDOUBLEAU. You are n't thinking of — One of my best friends — very well disposed — a capital fellow — an excellent magistrate, full of energy and discernment. I mentioned his name to Eugène in connection with the vacant post of Councillor.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*offering him the report*] You 've picked the wrong man. I am going to show you a document about him. Besides, the post is promised to Monsieur Vagret.

MONDOUBLEAU. What is wrong?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Here. I shall have to report

him to the Superior Council of the Magistracy or proceed against him in the Court of Appeal.

MONDOUBLEAU. What has he done?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Read it.

MONDOUBLEAU [*after casting a glance over the document which the other has handed to him*] Of course. But really — there 's nothing in that. If you keep quiet about it, no one will know anything. No scandal. The magistracy is suffering from too many attacks already just now, without our providing our enemies with weapons.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Unfortunately Coire knows of it, and he threatens to tell the whole story in his paper unless Monsieur Mouzon is sent away from Mauleon.

MONDOUBLEAU. The devil! [*He begins to laugh*]

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. What are you laughing at?

MONDOUBLEAU. Nothing — an extravagant idea, a jest. [*He laughs*] Tell me — but you won't be annoyed? — it 's only a joke —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Well?

MONDOUBLEAU. I was thinking — I tell you, it 's a grotesque idea. But after all — after all, if you propose Mouzon for the Councillor's chair at Pau, you will be pleasing everyone!

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. My dear deputy —

MONDOUBLEAU. A joke — of course, merely a joke — but what 's so amusing about it is that if you did so it would please Coire, it would please me, it would please Mouzon, and it would please Eugène, who does n't want any scandal.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. But it would be a —

MONDOUBLEAU. No, no. In politics there can be no scandal except where there is publicity.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. But really —

MONDOUBLEAU. I agree with you — I know all that could be said — I repeat, I am only chaffing. And do

you realize — it 's very curious — when one reflects — this fantastic solution is the only one that does not offer serious disadvantages — obvious disadvantages. That is so. If you leave Mouzon here, Coire tells everything. If you proceed against him, you give a certain section of the press an opportunity it won't lose — an opportunity of sapping one of the pillars of society. Those gentry are not particular as to the means they employ. They will confound the whole magistracy with Mouzon. It won't be Mouzon who will be the rake, but the Court, the Court of Appeal. There will be mud on all — on every robe.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. But you can't seriously ask me —

MONDOUBLEAU. Do you know what we ought to do? Let us go and talk it over with Rollet the senator — he is only a step from here.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I assure you —

MONDOUBLEAU. Come — come. You will put in a word as to your going to Orléans at the same time. What have you to risk? I tell you my solution is the best. You will come to it, I assure you! I 'll take you along. [*He takes his arm*]

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Well, well, I had certainly something to say to Rollet.

The doorkeeper enters.

DOORKEEPER. Your honor —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Where are they? The verdict —?

DOORKEEPER. Not yet. Monsieur Vagret has been making a reply.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Is the jury in the withdrawing room?

DOORKEEPER. No, your honor. They were going out when Monsieur Vagret asked for an adjournment.

MONDOUBLEAU. What an idea! Really! Well, my friend, let us go. I tell you, you 'll come round!

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*weakly*] Never! Never!

SCENE VII: — *Recorder, then the doorkeeper, then Madame Vagret, the President of Assizes, Bunerat, Madame Bunerat, and Vagret.*

RECORDER [*much moved*] Admirable!

DOORKEEPER [*half opening the door at the back*] Monsieur Benoît! What 's the news?

RECORDER. Splendid! Our Prosecutor was admirable — and that Etchepare is the lowest swine.

Enter Madame Vagret, greatly moved. The recorder goes up to her. The doorkeeper disappears.

MADAME VAGRET. Ah! My God!

RECORDER. Madame Vagret, I am only a simple clerk, but allow me to say it was admirable! Wonderful!

MADAME VAGRET. Wonderful!

RECORDER. As for the counsel from Bordeaux, Monsieur Vagret had him absolutely at his mercy!

MADAME VAGRET. Had n't he?

RECORDER. He 's certain enough, now, to be condemned to death!

MADAME VAGRET. Certain!

RECORDER. Madame, the jurymen were looking at that fellow Etchepare, that thug, in a way that made my blood run cold. As Monsieur Vagret went on with his speech you felt they would have liked to settle his hash themselves — the wretch!

MADAME VAGRET. I saw that —

RECORDER. I beg your pardon, Madame — I am forgetting myself — but there are moments when one is thankful, yes, so gratified, that social differences don't count.

MADAME VAGRET. You are right, my dear man.

Enter the President of Assizes and Bunerat.

THE PRESIDENT. Madame, I congratulate you! We 've got it, the capital sentence!

MADAME VAGRET. We have it safely this time, have n't we, Monsieur?

THE PRESIDENT. That is certain. But where is our hero? Magnificent — he was magnificent — was n't he, Bunerat?

BUNERAT. Oh, sir, but the manner in which you presided prepared the way so well —

THE PRESIDENT. Well, well, I don't say I count for nothing in the result, but we must do justice to Vagret. [*To Madame Vagret*] You ought to be greatly gratified — very proud and happy, my dear Madame —

MADAME VAGRET. Oh, I am, your honor —

THE PRESIDENT. But what a strange idea to demand an adjournment! Is he unwell?

MADAME VAGRET. Oh, dear!

THE PRESIDENT. No. Here he is.

Enter Vagret. He is anxious.

MADAME VAGRET. Ah, my dear! [*She takes his hand in hers. She can say no more, being choked by tears of joy*]

THE PRESIDENT. It was wonderful!

BUNERAT. I can't restrain myself from congratulating you too.

VAGRET. Really, you confuse me. The whole merit is yours, Monsieur.

THE PRESIDENT. Not at all. Do you know what carried them all away? [*He lights a cigarette*]

VAGRET. No!

THE PRESIDENT. It was when you exclaimed, "Gentlemen of the jury, you own houses, farms, and property; you have beloved wives, and daughters whom you tenderly cherish. Beware —" You were splendid

there! [*Resuming*] "Beware, if you leave such crimes unpunished; beware, if you allow yourselves to be led astray by the eloquent sentimentality of the defence; beware, I tell you, if you fail in your duty as the instrument of justice; beware, lest those above you snatch up the sword which has fallen from your feeble hands, when the blood that you have not avenged will be spilt upon you and yours!" That was fine! Very fine! And it produced a great effect.

BUNERAT. But you, my dear President, you moved them even more noticeably when you recalled the fact, very appropriately, that the accused loved the sight of blood.

THE PRESIDENT. Ah, yes, that told a little!

ALL. What? What was that?

BUNERAT. The President put this question: "On the morning of the crime did you not slaughter two sheep?" "Yes," replied the accused. And then, looking him straight in the eyes —

THE PRESIDENT. Yes, I asked him: "You were getting into practice, were n't you?" [*To Vagret*] But after all, if I have to a certain extent affected the result, the greater part of the honor of the day is yours.

VAGRET. You are too kind.

THE PRESIDENT. Not at all! And your peroration! [*With an artist's curiosity*] You were really, were you not, under the stress of a great emotion, a really great emotion?

VAGRET [*gravely*] Yes, I was under the stress of a great emotion, a really great emotion.

THE PRESIDENT. You turned quite pale when you faced the jury — when you added, in a clear voice, "Gentlemen, I demand the head of this man!"

VAGRET [*his eyes fixed*] Yes.

THE PRESIDENT. Then you made a sign to the advocate.

VAGRET. Yes. I thought he would have something else to say.

THE PRESIDENT. But why delay the verdict? You had won the victory.

VAGRET. Precisely.

THE PRESIDENT. What do you mean?

VAGRET. During my indictment a fact came to light that worried me.

THE PRESIDENT. A fact?

VAGRET. Not a fact — but — in short — [*A pause*] I beg your pardon — I am very tired —

THE PRESIDENT. I can very well understand your emotion, my dear Vagret. One always feels — on the occasion of one's first death sentence — but —you will see one gets used to it. [*Going out, to Bunerat*] Indeed, he does look very tired.

BUNERAT. I fancy he is feeling his position too keenly.

VAGRET. As I was leaving the Court I met the Attorney-General. I begged him urgently to give me a moment's conversation. I wanted to speak with him alone — and with you, Monsieur le Président.

BUNERAT. As you wish.

MADAME VAGRET. I am afraid you are unwell, my dear. I shall wait there. I will come back directly these gentlemen have gone.

VAGRET. Very well.

MADAME BUNERAT [*going out, to her husband*] There 's a man ready to do something stupid.

BUNERAT. That does n't concern us.

They go out.

SCENE VIII: — *Vagret, the President of Assizes, then the Attorney-General.*

THE PRESIDENT. Did you notice any mistake on my part in the direction of the case?

VAGRET. No, if any mistake was made, it was I who made it.

The Attorney-General enters.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. What is this that is so serious, my dear sir?

VAGRET. It 's this — I am more worried than I can say. I want to appeal to the conscience of you two gentlemen — to reassure myself —

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Tell us.

VAGRET. A whole series of facts — the attitude of the accused — certain details which had escaped me — have given rise, in my mind, to a doubt as to the guilt of this man.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Was there any mention of these facts, these details, in the brief?

VAGRET. Certainly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Had the advocate studied this brief?

VAGRET. Naturally.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Well, then? What are you worrying yourself about?

VAGRET. But — suppose the man is not guilty?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. The jury will decide. We can do no more, all of us, than bow to its verdict.

VAGRET. Let me tell you, sir, how my convictions have been shaken.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I do not wish to know. All that is a matter between yourself and your conscience. You have the right to explain your scruples to the jury. You know the proverb: "The pen is a slave, but speech is free."

VAGRET. I shall follow your advice.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. I do not give you any advice.

VAGRET. I shall explain my doubts to the jury.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. It will mean acquittal.

VAGRET. What would you have?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Do as you wish; but I should like to tell you one thing. When a man plans a startling trick of this kind and has the courage to accomplish it entirely of his own accord, he must have the courage to accept the sole responsibility of the blunders he may commit. You are too clever; you want to discover some means by which you need not be the only one to suffer from the consequences of your vacillations.

VAGRET. Clever? I? How?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Come, come! We are not children, and I can perfectly well see the trap into which you have lured me. You are sheltering yourself behind me. If the Chancellery should complain of your attitude, you will say that you consulted your superior, and I shall be the victim. And then I shall have a quarrel with the Chancellery on my hands. You don't care, you don't think of my position or my interests, of which you know nothing. Some silly idea gets into your head, and against my will you want to make me responsible for it. I say again, it is extremely clever, and I congratulate you, but I don't thank you.

VAGRET. You have misunderstood me, sir. I have no wish to burden you with the responsibilities I am about to assume. I should hardly choose the moment when I am on the point of being appointed Councillor to perpetrate such a blunder. I told you of my perplexity, and I asked your advice. That was all.

THE PRESIDENT. Are you certain one way or the other?

VAGRET. If I were certain, should I ask advice? [*A pause*] If we only had a cause for cassation, a good —

THE PRESIDENT [*enraged*] What's that you say? Cause for cassation? Based on an error or on an oversight on my part, no doubt! Really, you have plenty of imagination! You are attacked by certain doubts,

certain scruples — I don't know what — and in order to quiet your morbidly distracted conscience you ask me kindly to make myself the culprit! Convenient, in truth, to foist on others who have done their duty the blunders one may have committed oneself!

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*quietly*] It is indeed.

THE PRESIDENT. And at the Chancellery, when they mention me, they 'll say, " Whatever sort of a councillor is this, who has n't even the capacity to preside over an Assize Court at Mauleon! " A man whom we 've taken such trouble to get condemned! And to make me, me, the victim of such trickery! No, no! Think of another way, my dear Monsieur; you won't employ that, I can assure you.

VAGRET. Then I shall seek other means; but I shall not leave matters in their present state.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL. Do what you like, but realize that I have given you no advice in one direction or another.

VAGRET. I realize that.

THE PRESIDENT. When you have decided to resume the hearing you will notify us.

VAGRET. I will notify you.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL [*to the President*] Let us go.

They leave the office.

SCENE IX: — *Vagret, Madame Vagret.*

MADAME VAGRET. What is it?

VAGRET. Nothing.

MADAME VAGRET. Nothing? You are so depressed — and yet you 've just had such a success as will tell on your career.

VAGRET. It is that success which alarms me.

MADAME VAGRET. Alarms you?

VAGRET. Yes, I 'm afraid —

MADAME VAGRET. Afraid of what?

VAGRET. Of having gone too far.

MADAME VAGRET. Too far! Does n't the murderer deserve death ten times over?

VAGRET [*after a pause*] Are you quite certain, yourself, that he is a murderer?

MADAME VAGRET. Yes.

VAGRET [*in a low voice*] Well — for myself —

MADAME VAGRET. You?

VAGRET. I — I don't know. I know nothing.

MADAME VAGRET. My God!

VAGRET. A dreadful thing happened to me in the course of my indictment. While I, the State Attorney, the official prosecutor, was exercising my function, another self was examining the case calmly, in cold blood; an inner voice kept reproaching me for my violence and insinuating into my mind a doubt, which has gone on increasing. A painful struggle has been going on in my mind, a cruel struggle — and if, as I was finishing, I labored under that emotion of which the President was speaking, if when I demanded the death penalty my voice was scarcely audible, it was because I was at the end of my struggle; because my conscience was on the point of winning the battle, and I made haste to finish, because I was afraid it would speak out against my will. When I saw the advocate remain seated and that he was not going to resume his speech in order to tell the jury the things I would have had him tell them — then I was really afraid of myself, afraid of my actions, of my words, of their terrible consequences, and I wanted to gain time.

MADAME VAGRET. But, my dear, you have done your duty; if the advocate has not done his, that does not concern you.

VAGRET. Always the same reply. If I were an honest man I should tell the jury, when the hearing

is resumed, of the doubts that have seized me. I should explain how those doubts arose in me; I should call their attention to a point which I deliberately concealed from them, because I believed the counsel for the defence would point it out to him.

MADAME VAGRET. You know, my dear, how thoroughly I respect your scruples, but allow me to tell you all the same that it won't be you who will declare Etchepare guilty or not guilty; it will be the jury. If anyone ought to feel disturbed, it is Maître Plaçat, not you —

VAGRET. But I ought to represent justice!

MADAME VAGRET. Here is a prisoner who comes before you with previous convictions, with a whole crushing series of circumstances establishing his guilt. He is defended by whom? By one of the ornaments of the Bar, a man famed for his conscience as much as for his ability and his oratorical skill. You expound the facts to the jury. If the jury agrees with you, I cannot see that your responsibility as a magistrate is involved.

VAGRET. I don't think about my responsibility as a magistrate — but my responsibility as a man is certainly involved! No! No! I have not the right. I tell you there is a series of circumstances in this case of which no one has spoken and the nature of which makes me believe in the innocence of the accused.

MADAME VAGRET. But — these circumstances — how was it you knew nothing of them until now?

VAGRET [*his head drooping*] Do you think I did know nothing of them? My God! Shall I have the courage to tell you everything? I am not a bad man, am I? I would n't wish anyone to suffer for a fault of mine — but — oh, I am ashamed to admit it, to say it aloud, even, when I have admitted it to myself! Well, when I was studying the brief, I had got it so

firmly fixed in my mind, to begin with, that Etchepare was a criminal, that when an argument in his favor presented itself to my mind, I rejected it utterly, shrugging my shoulders. As for the facts of which I am speaking, and which gave rise to my doubts — at first I simply tried to prove that those facts were false, taking, from the depositions of the witnesses, only that which would militate against their truth and rejecting all the rest, with a terrible simplicity of bad faith. And in the end, in order to dissipate my last scruples, I told myself, just as you told me, "That is the business of the defence; it is n't mine!" Listen, and you 'll see to what point the exercise of the magistrate's office distorts our natures, makes us unjust and cruel. At first I had a feeling of delight when I saw that the President, in his cross-examination, was throwing no light whatever on this series of little facts. It was my profession speaking in me, my profession, do you see? Oh, what poor creatures we are, what poor creatures!

MADAME VAGRET. Perhaps the jury won't find him guilty?

VAGRET. It will find him guilty.

MADAME VAGRET. Or it may find there are extenuating circumstances.

VAGRET. No. I adjured them too earnestly to refuse to do so. I was zealous enough, was n't I? Violent enough?

MADAME VAGRET. That 's true. Why did you make your indictment so passionately?

VAGRET. Ah, why, why? Long before the hearing of the case it was so clearly understood by everybody that the prisoner was the criminal! And then it all went to my head, it intoxicated me — the way they talked. I was the spokesman of humanity, I was to reassure the countryside, I was to restore tranquillity to the family, and I don't know what else! So then —

I felt I must show myself equal to the part intrusted to me. My first indictment was relatively moderate — but when I saw the celebrated counsel making the jurymen weep, I thought I was lost; I felt the verdict would escape me. Contrary to my habit, I replied. When I rose to my feet for the second time I was like a man fighting, who has just had a vision of defeat, and who therefore fights with the strength of despair. From that moment Etchepare, so to speak, no longer existed. I was no longer concerned to defend society or sustain my accusation; I was contending against the advocate; it was a trial of orators, a competition of actors; I had to be the victor at all costs. I had to convince the jury, resume my hold on it, wring from it the double "yes" of the verdict. I tell you, Etchepare no longer counted; it was I who counted, my vanity, my reputation, my honor, my future. It 's shameful, I tell you, shameful. At any cost I wanted to prevent the acquittal which I felt was certain. And I was so afraid of not succeeding that I employed every argument, good and bad, even that of representing to the terrified jurymen their own houses in flames, their own flesh and blood murdered. I spoke of the vengeance of God falling on judges without severity. And all this in good faith — or rather unconsciously, in a burst of passion, in an access of anger against the advocate, whom I hated at that moment with all my might. My success was greater than I hoped; the jury is ready to obey me; and I, my dear, I have allowed myself to be congratulated, I have grasped the hands held out to me. That is what it is to be a magistrate!

MADAME VAGRET. Never mind. Perhaps there are n't ten in all France who would have acted otherwise.

VAGRET. You are right. Only — if one reflects — it 's precisely that that 's so dreadful.

RECORDER [*entering*] Monsieur le Procureur, the President is asking when the sitting can be resumed.

VAGRET. At once.

MADAME VAGRET. What are you going to do?

VAGRET. My duty as an honest man. [*He makes ready to go*]

CURTAIN.

ACT IV

SCENES — *Same as the Second Act.*

SCENE I: — *Bunerat, the President of Assizes, and Vagret.*

BUNERAT. Well, your honor, there 's another session finished.

THE PRESIDENT [*in red robe*] I 've been in a blue funk lest these brutes would make me lose my train. I 'm going shooting to-morrow on the Cambo Ponds, you see, my dear fellow, and after to-night's train it 's no go. [*Looks at his watch*] Oh, I 've an hour and a half yet.

BUNERAT. And what do you think of it, your honor?

THE PRESIDENT. Of what? Of the acquittal? What does it matter to me? I don't care — on the contrary, I prefer it. I am certain the advocate won't ferret out some unintentional defect — some formality gone wrong. Where 's my hat-box?

He is about to stand on a chair to reach the hat-box, which is on the top of a cupboard. Bunerat precedes him.

BUNERAT. Permit me, Monsieur. You are at home here. [*From the chair*] I believe I shall have the pleasure of seeing you here again next session. [*He sighs, holding out the hat-box*]

THE PRESIDENT. A pleasure I shall share, my dear fellow. [*He takes out a small felt hat from the box*]

BUNERAT. Would you like a brush? There's Mouzon's brush. [*A sigh*] Ah, good God, when shall I leave Mauleon? I should so like to live at Pau!

THE PRESIDENT. Pooh! A much overrated city! Come, come!

BUNERAT. I suppose my new duties won't take me there yet?

THE PRESIDENT. Don't you worry yourself. In the winter, yes, it's very well — but the summer — ah, the summer.

BUNERAT. I am not the one appointed?

THE PRESIDENT. Ah! You know already?

BUNERAT. Yes — I — yes — that is to say, I didn't know it was official.

THE PRESIDENT [*brushing his hat and catching sight of a dent*] Dented already. In these days the hats they sell you for felt, my dear chap, they're pasteboard, simply —

BUNERAT. True. Yes, I didn't know it was official. Monsieur Mouzon is very lucky.

Enter Vagret in mufti.

THE PRESIDENT. There, there is our dear Monsieur Vagret. Changed your dress already. Yes, you're at home, you. For my part I must pack up all this. Where the devil is the box I put my gown in? [*Bunerat makes a step to fetch it and then remains motionless*] It's curious — that — what have they done with it? In that cupboard — you haven't seen it, my dear Monsieur Bunerat?

BUNERAT. No.

THE PRESIDENT. Ah, here it is — and my jacket in it. [*He opens the box and takes out his jacket, which he lays aside on the table*] Well, well, you've got them acquitted, my dear sir! Are you satisfied?

VAGRET. I am very glad.

THE PRESIDENT. And if they are the murderers?

VAGRET. I must console myself with Berryer's remark: "It is better to leave ten guilty men at liberty than to punish one innocent man."

THE PRESIDENT. You have a sensitive nature.

VAGRET. Ought one to have a heart of stone, then, to be a magistrate?

THE PRESIDENT [*tying up the box in which he has put his judge's bonnet*] One must keep oneself above the little miseries of humanity.

VAGRET. Above the miseries of others.

THE PRESIDENT. Hang it all —

VAGRET. That is what we call egoism.

THE PRESIDENT. Do you say that for my benefit?

VAGRET. For all three of us.

BUNERAT. Au revoir, gentlemen. Au revoir. [*He shakes hands with each and goes out*]

THE PRESIDENT [*taking off his gown*] My dear Monsieur, I beg you to be more moderate in your remarks.

VAGRET. Ah, I assure you that I am moderate! If I were to speak what is in my mind, you would hear very unpleasant things.

THE PRESIDENT [*in shirt sleeves*] Are you forgetting to whom you are speaking? I am a Councillor of the Court, Monsieur le Procureur.

VAGRET. Once again, I am not speaking to you merely; the disagreeable things I might say would condemn me equally. I am thinking of those poor people.

THE PRESIDENT [*brushing his gown*] What poor people? The late prisoners? But after all, they are acquitted. What more do you want? To provide them with an income?

VAGRET. They are acquitted, true; but they are condemned, all the same. They are sentenced to misery for life.

THE PRESIDENT. What are you talking about?

VAGRET. And through your fault, Monsieur.

THE PRESIDENT [*stopping in his task of folding his gown*] My fault!

VAGRET. And what is so particularly serious is that you did n't know it, you did n't see, you have n't seen the harm you did.

THE PRESIDENT. What harm? I have done no harm! I?

VAGRET. When you informed Etchepare that his wife had long ago been condemned for receiving stolen goods, and that she had been seduced before his marriage with her. When you did that you did a wicked thing.

THE PRESIDENT. You are a Don Quixote. Do you suppose Etchepare did n't know all that?

VAGRET. If you had noticed his emotion when his wife, on your asking her if the facts were correct, replied that they were, you would be certain, as I am, that he knew nothing.

THE PRESIDENT [*packing his gown in its box*] Well, even so! You attribute to people of that sort susceptibilities which they don't possess.

VAGRET. Your honor, "people of that sort" have hearts, just as you and I have.

THE PRESIDENT. Admitted. Did n't my duty force me to do as I did?

VAGRET. I know nothing about that.

THE PRESIDENT [*still in shirt sleeves*] It 's the law that is guilty, then, eh? Yes? Well, Monsieur, if I did my duty — and I did — you are lacking in your duty in attacking the law, whose faithful servant you should be, the law which I, for one, am proud to represent.

VAGRET. There 's no reason for your pride.

THE PRESIDENT. Monsieur!

VAGRET. It 's a monstrous thing, I tell you, that

one can reproach an accused person, whether innocent or guilty, with a fault committed ten years ago, and which has been expiated. Yes, Monsieur, it is a horrible thing that, after punishing, the law does not pardon.

THE PRESIDENT [*who has put on his jacket and hat*] If you think the law is bad, get it altered. Enter Parliament.

VAGRET. Alas, if I were a deputy, it is probable that I should be like the rest; instead of thinking of such matters I should think of nothing but calculating the probable duration of the Government.

THE PRESIDENT [*his box under his arm*] In that case — is the doorkeeper —

VAGRET [*touching a bell*] He will come. Then it 's Monsieur Mouzon who is appointed in my place?

THE PRESIDENT. It is Monsieur Mouzon.

VAGRET. Because he 's the creature of a deputy, a Mondoubleau —

THE PRESIDENT. I cannot allow you to speak ill of Monsieur Mondoubleau — before my face.

VAGRET. You think you may perhaps have need of him.

THE PRESIDENT. Precisely. [*The doorkeeper appears*] Will you carry that to my hotel for me? The hotel by the station. You will easily recognize it; my sentry is at the door. [*He hands the doorkeeper his boxes*] Au revoir, my dear Vagret — no offence taken.

He goes. Vagret puts on his hat and also makes ready to go. Enter recorder and Etchepare.

THE RECORDER. You are going, your honor?

VAGRET. Yes.

THE RECORDER. You won't have any objection, then, if I bring Etchepare in here? He 's in the corridor, waiting for the formalities of his release — and he complains he 's an object of curiosity to everyone.

VAGRET. Of course!

THE RECORDER. I 'll tell them to bring his wife here too when she leaves the record office.

VAGRET. Very well.

THE RECORDER. I am just going to warn the warders — but the woman Etchepare can't be released immediately.

VAGRET. Why?

THE RECORDER. She 's detained in connection with another case. She 's charged with abusing a magistrate in the exercise of his duty.

VAGRET. Is that magistrate Monsieur Mouzon?

THE RECORDER. Yes, Monsieur.

VAGRET. I will try to arrange that.

THE RECORDER. Good-day, your honor.

VAGRET. Good-day.

SCENE II.

THE RECORDER [*at the door*] Etchepare — come in. You had better wait here for your final discharge. It won't take much longer.

ETCHEPARE. Thank you, Monsieur.

THE RECORDER. Well, there you are, then, acquitted, my poor fellow! There 's one matter done with.

ETCHEPARE. It 's finished as far as justice is concerned, Monsieur; it is n't finished for me. I 'm acquitted, it 's true, but my life is made miserable.

THE RECORDER. You did n't know —

ETCHEPARE. That 's it.

THE RECORDER. It 's a long time ago — you 'll forgive her.

ETCHEPARE. Things like that, Monsieur — a Basque never forgives them. It 's as though a thunderbolt had struck me to the heart. And all the misfortune that 's befallen us — it 's she who is the cause — God has avenged himself. Everything 's over.

THE RECORDER [*after a pause*] I am sorry for you with all my heart.

ETCHEPARE. Thank you, Monsieur. [*A pause*] Since you are so kind, Monsieur, will you allow my mother, who 's there in the corridor, waiting for me, to come and speak to me?

THE RECORDER. I 'll send her in to you. Good-bye.

ETCHEPARE. Good-bye.

SCENE III: — *The recorder goes out. Enter Etchepare's mother.*

ETCHEPARE [*pressing his mother's head against his breast*] Poor old mother — how the misery of these three months has changed you!

THE MOTHER. My poor boy, how you must have suffered!

ETCHEPARE. That woman!

THE MOTHER. Yes, they 've just been telling me.

ETCHEPARE. For ten years I 've lived with that thief — that wretched woman! How she lied! Ah! When I heard that judge say to her, "You were convicted of theft and complicity with your lover," and when, before all those people, she owned to it — I tell you, mummy, I thought the skies were falling on my head — and when she admitted she 'd been that man's mistress — I don't know just what happened — nor which I would have killed soonest — the judge who said such things so calmly or her who admitted them with her back turned to me. And then I was on the point of confessing myself guilty — I, an innocent man — in order not to learn any more — to get away — but I thought of you and the children! [*A long pause*] Come! We 've got to make up our minds what we 're going to do. You left them at home?

THE MOTHER. No. I had to send them to our

cousin at Bayonne. We 've no longer got a home — we 've nothing — we are ruined. Besides, I 've got a horror of this place now. The women edge away and make signs to one another when I meet them, and in the church they leave me all alone in the middle of an empty space. Already — I had to take the children away from school.

ETCHEPARE. My God!

THE MOTHER. No one would speak to them. One day Georges picked a quarrel with the biggest, and they fought, and as Georges got the better of it, the other, to revenge himself, called him the son of a gallows-bird.

ETCHEPARE. And Georges?

THE MOTHER. He came home crying and would n't go out of doors. It was then that I sent them away to Bayonne.

ETCHEPARE. That 's what we 'll do. Go away. We 'll go and fetch them. To-morrow or to-night I shall be with you again. There are emigration companies there — boats to America — they 'll send all four of us — they 'll give us credit for the voyage on account of the children.

THE MOTHER. And when they ask for their mother —

ETCHEPARE [*after a pause*] You 'll tell them she 's dead.

SCENE IV: — *Yanetta is shown in.*

YANETTA [*to someone outside*] Very good, Monsieur. [*The door is closed*]

THE MOTHER [*without looking at Yanetta*] Then I 'll go.

ETCHEPARE [*the same*] Yes. I shall see you again to-night or down there to-morrow.

THE MOTHER. Very well.

ETCHEPARE. Directly you get there you 'll go and find out about the day and hour.

THE MOTHER. Very well.

ETCHEPARE. Till to-morrow then.

THE MOTHER. To-morrow. [*She goes out without glancing at Yanetta*]

YANETTA [*takes a few steps towards her husband, falls on her knees, and clasps her hands. In a low voice*] Forgive me!

ETCHEPARE. Never!

YANETTA. Don't say never!

ETCHEPARE. Was the judge lying?

YANETTA. No — he was n't lying.

ETCHEPARE. You wretched thing!

YANETTA. Yes, I am a wretched thing! Forgive me!

ETCHEPARE. Kill you rather! I could kill you!

YANETTA. Yes, yes! But forgive me!

ETCHEPARE. You 're just a loose woman — a loose woman from Paris, with no honor, no shame, no honesty even!

YANETTA. Yes! Insult me — strike me!

ETCHEPARE. For ten years you have been lying to me!

YANETTA. Oh, how I wished I could have told you everything! Oh, how many times I began that dreadful confession! I never had courage enough. I was always afraid of your anger, Pierre, and of the pain I should cause you — I saw you were so happy!

ETCHEPARE. You came from up there, fresh from your vice, fresh from prison, and you chose me to be your gull.

YANETTA. My God, to think he believes that!

ETCHEPARE. You brought me the leavings of a swindler — the leavings of a swindler — and you stole,

in my house, the place of an honest woman! Your lies have brought the curse of God on my family and it 's you who are the cause of everything. The misfortune that 's just befallen us, it 's you who are the cause of it, I tell you! You 're a pest, accursed, damned! Don't say another word to me! Don't speak to me!

YANETTA. Have you no pity, Pierre? Do you suppose I 'm not suffering?

ETCHEPARE. If you are suffering you 've deserved it! You have n't suffered enough yet. But what had I ever done to you that you should choose me for your victim? What did I ever do that I should have to bear what I 'm suffering? You 've made me a coward — you 've lowered me almost to your own level — I ought to have been able to put you out of my mind and my heart already! And I can't! And I 'm suffering torture, terrible torture — for I 'm suffering through the love I once had for you. You — you were everything to me for ten years — my whole life. You 've been everything, everything! And now the one hope left me is that I may forget you!

YANETTA. Oh, forgive me!

ETCHEPARE. Never! Never!

YANETTA. Don't say that word — only God has the right to say — never! I will come back to you. I 'll be only like the head servant — no, the lowest if you like! I won't take my place in the home again until you tell me to.

ETCHEPARE. We have no house; we have no home. Nothing is left now! And I tell you again it 's your fault — and it 's because you used to be there, in the mother's place, my mother's place, you, a lie and a sacrilege — it 's because of that that misfortune has overtaken us!

YANETTA. I swear to you I 'd make you forget it all

in time — I 'd be so humble, so devoted, so repentant. And wherever you go I shall follow you. Pierre — think, your children still need me.

ETCHEPARE. My children! You shall never see them again! You shall never speak to them. I won't have you kiss them. I won't have you even touch them!

YANETTA [*changing her tone*] Ah, no, not that, not that! The children! No, you are wrong there! You can deprive me of everything — you can put every imaginable shame upon me — you can force me to beg my bread — I 'll do it willingly. You need n't look at me — you need n't speak to me except to abuse me — you can do anything, anything you like. But my children, my children — they are mine, the fruit of my body — they are still part of me — they are blood of my blood and bone of my bone forever. You might cut off one of my arms, and my arm would be a dead thing, and no part of myself any more, but you can't stop my children being my children.

ETCHEPARE. You have made yourself unworthy to keep them.

YANETTA. Unworthy! What has unworthiness to do with it? Have I ever failed in my duty to them? Have I been a bad mother? Answer me! I have n't, have I? Well then, if I have n't been a bad mother, my rights over them are as great as ever they were! Unworthy! I might be a thousand times more guilty — more unworthy, as you call it — but neither you, nor the law, nor the priests, nor God himself would have the right to take them from me. I have been to blame as a wife, it 's possible, but as a mother I 've nothing to reproach myself with. Well then — well then — no one can steal them from me! And you, who could think of such a thing, you 're a wretch! Yes, it 's to avenge yourself that you want to part me from them! You 're just a coward! Just a man! There 's no

fatherhood left in your heart — you don't think of them. Yes — you are lying — I tell you, you are lying! When you say I 'm not worthy to bring them up you 're lying! It 's only a saying — only words. You know it is n't true — you know I 've nourished them, cared for them, loved them, consoled them, and I have taught them to say their prayers every night, and I would go on doing so. You know that no other woman will ever fill my place — but that makes no difference to you. You forget them — you want to punish me, so you want to take them from me. I 'm justified in saying to you that it 's an act of cowardly wickedness and a vile piece of vengeance! Ah! The children! You want to gamble with them now. No — to take them away from me — think, Pierre, think; it is n't possible, what you are saying!

ETCHEPARE. You are right; I am revenging myself! What you think an impossibility is done already. My mother has taken the children and gone away with them.

YANETTA. I shall find them again.

ETCHEPARE. America is a big country.

YANETTA. I shall find them again!

ETCHEPARE. Then I shall tell them why I have taken them away from you!

YANETTA. Never! Never that! I 'll obey you, but swear —

The recorder enters.

THE RECORDER. Etchepare, come and sign your discharge. You will be released at once.

YANETTA. Wait a moment, Monsieur, wait a moment. [*To Etchepare*] I agree to separation if I must. I will disappear — you will never hear of me again. But in return for this wicked sacrifice swear solemnly that you will never tell them.

ETCHEPARE. I swear.

YANETTA. You swear never to tell them anything that may lessen their affection for me?

ETCHEPARE. I swear.

YANETTA. Promise me too — I beg you, Pierre — in the name of our happiness and my misery — promise to keep me fresh in their memory — let them pray for me, won't you?

ETCHEPARE. I swear it.

YANETTA. Then go — my life is done with.

ETCHEPARE. Good-bye.

He goes out with the recorder. At the door the latter meets Mouzon.

THE RECORDER [*to Etchepare*] They are coming to show you the way out.

THE RECORDER [*to Mouzon*] The woman Etchepare is there.

MOUZON. Ah, she 's there. Monsieur Vagret has been speaking of her. Well, I withdraw my complaint; I ask nothing better than that she shall be set at liberty. Now that I am a Councillor I don't want to be coming back from Pau every week for the examination. Proceed with the necessary formalities.

SCENE V: — *Mouzon, Yanetta, the recorder.*

MOUZON. Well — in consideration of the time you have been in custody, I am willing that you should be set at liberty — provisional liberty. I may, perhaps, even withdraw my complaint if you express regret for having insulted me.

YANETTA [*calmly*] I do not regret having insulted you.

MOUZON. Do you want to go back to prison?

YANETTA. My poor man, if you only knew how little it matters to me whether I go to prison or not!

MOUZON. Why?

YANETTA. Because I have nothing left, neither house, nor home, nor husband, nor children. [*She looks at him*] And — I think — I think —

MOUZON. You think?

YANETTA. I think it is you who are the cause of all the trouble.

MOUZON. You are both acquitted, are n't you? What more do you ask?

YANETTA. We have been acquitted, it is true. But all the same, I am no longer an honest woman — neither to my husband, nor to my children, nor to the world.

MOUZON. If anyone reproaches you with the penalty inflicted upon you formerly, if anyone makes any illusion to the time you have spent in custody under remand, you have the right to prosecute the offender in the courts. He will be punished.

YANETTA. Well! It is because someone reproached me with that old conviction that my husband has taken my children from me. That someone is a magistrate. Can I have him punished?

MOUZON. No.

YANETTA. Why not? Because he is a magistrate?

MOUZON. No. Because he is the law.

YANETTA. The law! [*Violently*] Then the law is wicked, wicked!

MOUZON. Come, no shouting, no insults, please. [*To the recorder*] Have you finished? Then go to the office and have an order made out for her discharge.

YANETTA. I 'm no scholar; I 've not studied the law in books, like you, and perhaps for that very reason I know better than you what is just and what is not. And I want to ask you a plain question: How is the law going to give me back my children and make up to me for the harm it 's done me?

MOUZON. The law owes you nothing.

YANETTA. The law owes me nothing! Then what are you going to do — you, the judge?

MOUZON. A magistrate is not responsible.

YANETTA. Ah, you are not responsible! So you can arrest people just as you like, just when you fancy, on a suspicion or even without a suspicion; you can bring shame and dishonor on their families; you can torture the unhappy, ferret into their past lives, expose their misfortunes, dig up forgotten offences, offences which have been atoned for and which go back to ten years ago; you can make use of your skill, your tricks and lies, and your cruelty to send a man to the foot of the scaffold, and worse still, you can drive people into taking a mother's children away from her — and after that you say, like Pontius Pilate, that you are n't responsible! Not responsible! Perhaps you are n't responsible in the eyes of this law of yours, since you tell me you are n't, but in the eyes of pure and simple justice, the justice of decent people, the justice of God, before that I swear you are responsible, and that is why I am going to call you to account!

She sees on Mouzon's desk the dagger which he uses as a paper-knife. He turns his back on her. She seizes the knife and puts it down again.

MOUZON. I order you to get out of here.

YANETTA. Listen to me. For the last time I ask you — what do you think you can do to make up to me — to give me back all I 've lost through your fault; what are you going to do to lessen my misery, and how do you propose to give me back my children?

MOUZON. I have nothing to say to you. I owe you nothing.

YANETTA. You owe me nothing! You owe me more than life — more than everything. My children I shall never see again. What you 've taken from me is the happiness of every moment of the day — their kisses

at night — the pride I felt in watching them grow up. Never, never again shall I hear them call me "mother." It's as though they were dead — it's as though you had killed them. [*She seizes the knife*] Yes! That's your work; it's you bad judges have done it; you have nearly made a criminal of an innocent man, and you force an honest woman, a mother — to become a criminal!

She stabs him. He falls.

CURTAIN.

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